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MARY STUART

BY

FLORENCE A. MACCUNN

AUTHOR OF "A LIFE OF JOHN KNOX"

WITH FORTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

SECOND AND CHEAPER EDITION

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TO MY SISTERS

E. C. S. C. H. M. M. V. D.

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MARY STUART

CHAPTER I

THE MOTHER

December 1542—July 1548

ANY one wishing to know what the direct influence of women would be in the governing of nations has only to make a study of Western Europe in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The English throne was occupied successively by two women sovereigns, and simultaneously in Scotland a queen regent was followed by a queen in her own right, while in France the widowed Catherine of Medici swayed the wills and directed the policy of her two effeminate younger sons for almost thirty years.

The epigram of the Duchess of Burgundy, that the times are happy when women rule because then men direct the policy, holds good only in the case of Elisabeth, paradoxically the most imperious and self-willed of the five.

Of these crowned ladies, thus fatefully and fatally placed at the head of affairs, none presents a figure so touching, dignified and attractive as Mary of Guise; none had so difficult and thankless a task. In her worst difficulties Elisabeth was upheld by the instinct that she had behind her the life of a great people, the consciousness that she had their enthusiastic sympathy. Neither the bitterness of personal disappointment nor the loneliness of unpopularity could deprive Mary Tudor of the con-

solation of thinking herself God's chosen instrument to bring back the English nation to the true faith. Through her long widowhood Catherine gratified to the full that passion for power which had been famished and repressed during her married life.

Mary of Guise alone had no personal ends to serve, nor did she find support and sympathy in her lonely task. The end of her unceasing labours was to keep secure the inheritance of a child she was barely to see after her seventh year; she spent her life ruling over aliens and saw her early popularity turning into suspicion and sour dislike; she tried to hold Scotland as an appanage of France, and France let her die at last besieged and defeated, looking in vain for adequate succours; all her actions—her high endeavours and her serious mistakes, her patience and her dissimulation alike—were prompted by one constant motive, devotion to the fortunes of France and of her daughter.

The eight children of Claude of Guise—Duke Francis at the head of the armies of France, the three younger brothers in their several commands by sea and land, the two cardinals in their plurality of benefices, Renée and Antoinette praying in their convents, Mary in alienated Scotland carrying out the family policy in defiance of her better judgment, were all united in one great aim, the glorification of the House of Guise. This family of magnificent adventurers was a cadet branch of the Dukes of Lorraine, one of those smaller semi-royal houses which, like Burgundy, held now to the Empire now to France. Consequently the Guises knew no real patriotism. They gained victories at the head of French armies but they recklessly sacrificed French

JAMES V. AND MARY OF GUISE

troops to the visionary hope of gaining the crown of Naples for their house. Though they had been the chief counsellors at the courts of four French kings, they owed no loyalty to the House of Valois. They bore eight royal quarterings in their arms and the idea of founding a dynasty haunted the imagination of the whole family. This family destiny was only fulfilled in the persons of Mary of Guise and her daughter. In her girlhood Mary Stuart was simply the flower in which the family tree had blossomed.

Why Mary of Guise was chosen to play her important part in the family fortunes while her two sisters were suffered to spend their days praying for them, we are not told. Probably her appearance and her alert, practical character marked her out for her part. She had been thought of at one time as the bride of the French King, Henry II., before his brother's death raised him to importance. She just escaped making one in the succession of Henry VIII.'s wives. There is a picture of her beside her second husband James V. The head is small in comparison with the tall figure and pillar-like throat, the face firm, intelligent and serenely friendly, a far stronger, happier face than that of her husband. It is from her father that Mary Stuart inherited the fine lines of her features, the delicate eyebrows and long soft eyes, but the resolve and animation come from the other side.

These fine qualities were needed to carry Mary of Guise through her troubled and anxious life, they never secured her prosperity or tranquillity. In the quiet old home at Joinville her mother, the Duchess Antoinette, had many anxious thoughts about the

high-spirited heavily-laden daughter in Scotland. In one of her simple, motherly letters she writes to her: "You have had so little joy in the world, and pain and trouble have been so often your lot, that methinks you hardly know now what pleasure means."

She can hardly have been happy with James V. She came to Scotland a young widow of twenty-three, leaving behind her an only child and the memory of her first short but happy marriage, to find a husband of twenty-eight who had in innumerable transitory passions wasted a heart and character richly endowed. The pathos and romance of his marriage in the previous year with Madame Madeleine, the consumptive little daughter of Francis the First who died a few weeks after landing in Scotland, had touched the heart or at least the sensibility of James Stuart, but the marriage with Mary of Guise was a pure matter of policy. The real true love of his fickle heart had been Janet Erskine. He had made tentative efforts to obtain her divorce from her husband, Douglas of Loch Leven, meaning to marry her and thus to legitimate the son she had borne him. This son, James Stuart, was afterwards to save his country and accuse his sister Mary as the Regent Murray. Had King James succeeded in his plan, it would have saved a world of woe.

Two sons were born to Mary of Guise, but both died in babyhood within twenty-four hours of each other. James, worn out by dissensions with his nobles and all the difficulties of his short life and long reign, saw in the loss the judgment of Heaven, and it served to deepen the depression and lassitude that were settling down upon him. At thirty-two, to the

jolly "King of the Commons," the popular "Gudeman of Ballangeioch," life meant only new difficulties and disappointments; a strong and menacing uncle across the Border; disaffected nobles at home; children of his begetting in other men's houses, but no heir to his throne. Yet there should have been hope. A child was expected, and, in the stately palace at Linlithgow, the queen was awaiting the event.

The king was in the south, organising the attack on England that ended disastrously at Solway Moss. Stricken to the heart with shame, and unable to face the new difficulties of the situation, he had returned for a week to Linlithgow where, if ever, his wife required his presence. Then, finding his inward wound too intolerable, he crept off by himself to Falkland.

Never was woman in more desolate case than Mary. She was alone in a strange land, her husband was dying, indifferent to her and to the child she was to bring him; men talked of little but defeat and the fears of invasion, even the earth was bound in an early and vigorous winter. Under such conditions Mary Stuart was born on the 8th of December 1542. Hardly the birth of a son would have roused James from his sorrowful apathy; the news of the birth of a daughter only deepened his gloom: "Devil go with it," he muttered. "It came with a lass, it will go with a lass."

It was Cardinal Beaton who brought the news of her husband's death to Mary at Linlithgow. The two were firm allies, the cardinal was "as good a Frenchman as she was a Frenchwoman." It was rumoured that in those early days they had put their

heads together and had secretly sent to the French king for aid. Women in those days had little time or peace to mourn their husbands; and never were woman and child more surrounded by enemies and dangers than Mary and her baby queen. France was many days' journey away, the Scotch nobles were hostile or at least suspicious, and across the Border, like the ogre in a fairy-tale, was Henry VIII. It amounted to an obsession, this desire of Henry's to profit by his nephew's death, to seize the strongholds of Scotland, and to gain possession of the child. Once he had her in England, betrothed to his young son, he hoped to be practically Governor of Scotland. By the end of January all the prisoners taken at Solway Moss were sent back deeply pledged to forward Henry's policy at any cost of patriotism and honour.

Much as Mary dreaded the English alliance for her child, another danger seemed nearer and more urgent. The next heir to the throne, the Earl of Arran, had been appointed governor. A stupid, vacillating mediocrity, he was not formidably ambitious, but his nearness to the throne was the one fact of any importance to him, and this made him eager to let no chance go past. He made proposals for a marriage between the little queen and his seven year old son. Such proposals were repugnant to the French queen mother but she dissimulated and received them diplomatically. Once, years later, when falsely accused of a breach of faith in her policy, she likened herself to a little bird constrained to build herself a nest as a "bield" from her foes; and certainly in the winter of 1543 she might have compared herself to a wild bird using all her cunning to keep her enemies from her nest. To deceive both Henry and Arran and, if

THE COURT OF LINLITHGOW PALACE

possible, to sow distrust between them was a game that required patience and deftness. Her one friend the cardinal was powerless to help. The first action of the "English Lords" on their return had been to embolden the governor to throw his rival into prison.

When in March, Sadler, the English Ambassador, brought the formal proposal of marriage from Henry VIII. the queen dowager received it with apparent cordiality, and took the opportunity to discredit Arran. "'The governor,' quoth the queen, 'said that the child was not like to live, but you shall see whether he saith truth or not.' Therewith she caused me to go with her to the chamber where the child was and showed her unto me, and also caused the nurse to unwrap her out of her clothes that I should see her naked. I assure your Majesty it is as goodly a child as I have seen of her age and as like to live with the grace of God." Forty-three years later Sadler was among the judges who condemned the Queen of Scots to death! Dissimulation and a patient waiting on circumstance were the only policy possible for the queen mother. Henry was urgent with his adherents to kidnap the two queens or, better still, the child without the mother. Edinburgh Castle was too near the Border to be safe; it was probably for security that Arran kept them virtually prisoners at Linlithgow.

Nothing in the short history of Mary Stuart's reign in Scotland is more romantic than the number of sudden flights she was constrained to make, hasty, unexpected rides through summer dawns or the blackness of winter nights. The first of such flights was when, in July (1543), the cardinal and his party—the cardinal was again at liberty and re-

establishing his ascendency—carried off the two queens from under the very hands of the Hamiltons and conveyed them to Stirling. Meantime the marriage contract between Henry and the governor had been signed, with no great alacrity on the side of the Scots.

The child was to be handed over to her grand-uncle at the age of ten. If force were used to get possession of her before that age, Sir George Douglas informed Sadler that the women would rise with their distaffs and the small boys would hurl stones against English intruders. When such is the temper of one of the contracting parties, any accident or delay is sure to be fatal to the transaction. Hostages to be sent to England were not readily come by; the governor suddenly and without explanation rode off to join the cardinal; Henry lost his temper and arrested Scotch merchant ships in his harbour. Since the death of the Maid of Noroway there had been no such opportunity of uniting the two kingdoms; it was lost by the impatience of the Tudor temper. On the 10th of September the child was crowned at Stirling. Sadler sneers at the lack of costly ceremonial, and indeed Coronations were not very joyous affairs in Scotland. Three infants in succession, Mary, her father and her son, were all crowned in seasons of blackest national anxiety. In spite of an attack of smallpox in the spring, the little one flourished at Stirling. The mother with playful fondness noted this to Sadler. "The queen told me that her daughter did grow apace, and soon she would be a woman if she took after her mother, who indeed is of the largest size."

While she grew and throve, various sinister influences were at work shaping her destiny. In the

gossiping pages of Pitscottie we read that two Scottish nobles were rivals for the hand of Mary of Guise, Patrick, Earl of Bothwell, and Matthew, Earl of Lennox, a curious anticipation of the tragic situation of twenty-four years later. Mary entertained both with diplomatic courtesy, but "having been a king's wife her heart was too high to look any lower." Unlike all the other widowed queens of Scotland, her predecessors, she never allowed passion, nor vanity nor personal weakness to complicate the difficult situation.

The presence of Lennox was in itself a complication. A rival claimant to the throne with Arran, he had been brought from France by the cardinal as a menace and counterweight to the governor. The reconciliation of those two heads of opposing factions and the firm attitude of the dowager sensibly diminished Lennox's importance. Chagrined and knowing no motive but self-interest he, in the autumn of 1543, sold himself to Henry. He used his credit with the envoys sent from France to seize arms and money landed at Dumbarton. For this treachery his lands were confiscated and he himself was exiled for more than twenty years from Scotland. As a reward for his services Henry, in the next year (1544), gave him in marriage the Lady Margaret Douglas, daughter of Margaret Tudor, widow of James IV. and of Douglas, Earl of Angus, the hereditary enemy of the Stuarts. His nearness to the Scottish throne—Arran the other claimant was of doubtful legitimacy;—her close relationship to the Royal Family of England; her claims to the confiscated estates of the Douglas; his embittered regrets for the forfeited lands of Lennox—here were elements to produce a hungry,

restless, intriguing household life; and in this home Darnley, Mary's future husband, was to grow up.

The five first years of Mary's life are filled with invasions, lawlessness and the treachery of Scottish noblemen. In this turmoil we lose sight of the widowed Queen and her child. The guardians of the little Queen, Lindsay, Livingston, Erskine and Montrose held themselves ready at a moment's notice to carry her off to a place of safety. Once, with the English foeman within reach of Stirling, she was hurried off to Dunkeld in the inaccessible Highlands. In 1547 the battle of Pinkie almost repeated the disaster of Flodden. Then, also, men asked one another when the English invader would be at their gates. The child was sent off to the island convent on the lake of Monteith, on the Borders of the Highlands.

Because no other place connected with Mary is free from associations of pain and fear, modern imagination has dwelt fondly on the picture of the six-year-old child in that peaceful place, fancying pleasant things hardly compatible with her short wintry visit. At least there was freedom from alarm and the child had merry company in the four little Maries, chosen as her attendants from the loyal houses of Beaton, Livingston, Fleming and Seton. If the old French soldier of fortune who a few months later accompanied the child to France, described her as "the most perfect child in the world," one may be sure that the good leisurely monks of Monteith were equally charmed and amused by their little guest.

Mary of Guise had profited by the national fear of England and hatred of Somerset to draw closer the alliance with France. The point she had always

THE CONVENT ON THE LAKE OF MONTEITH

MARY OF GUISE

aimed at was attained when in July 1548, she persuaded the council and governor to consent to the little Queen being affianced to the Dauphin, and sent her off at once to be brought up in France out of reach of the rough wooing of the English Protector.

Quickly, secretly, the departure was arranged. A French fleet sailed out of the Forth, then swept round the north of Scotland and put in again at Dumbarton. It was a large party that went on board; the four Maries accompanied the queen as well as several of her half-brothers and the governor's children. Mary was under the care of her governess, Lady Fleming, her father's half-sister, a merry, pretty woman curiously lacking in the discretion necessary for her post.

Here the story must follow the child to France, to prosperity and happy days, leaving the childless mother to carry on her troublesome task alone. The old Duchess of Guise knew what it meant to part with a child across the seas. She wrote pitying her daughter for her sorrow in the parting, "But at least you must hope that this loss of your child will mean rest and repose for the little creature." . . . She adds the fervid hope that she herself may see her daughter again before she died. She was to live to mourn not only that daughter's death, but the imprisonment of the little granddaughter she was so eager to welcome. Her own badly-spelled letters reveal in Mary of Guise not only indomitable courage—that she shared with most of her family—but a tender-hearted perception of suffering that she had learned in her own troubled life. She complains of the depredations of the French soldiers on the Scotch peasant, she knows the ruin brought on them by ruthless requisition, she grieves over their tables and chairs seized on for fuel. Of her

own severe sufferings—the sciatica which was the consequence of constant night alarms and hasty preparations—she speaks cheerfully and without self-pity. One lingers the more willingly in her company because we shall find no other character of such worth and attraction in the whole history of her daughter.

Note.—While these chapters are passing through the press my attention has been called to a delightful anecdote of the baby Queen. When she was only three or thereabouts, Cardinal Beaton entered the room where she was, apparently in his red robes. In sudden terror the child cried out, "Kill Redeaton! Kill Redeaton! He will take me away." The rhyme that was running in the quick-witted little creature's head was the old Scottish nursery tale:

"The red Etin of Ireland,
He lived in Ballygan,
He stole King Malcolm's daughter,
The King of fair Scotland;
He beats her, he binds her
He lays on her a band,
And every day he dings her
With a bright silver wand."

To us who know Queen Mary's history even her baby prattle has a strangely ominous ring.

Another new discovery is that, on her voyage to France, she alone of her company was free from sickness—she was child enough to laugh at her neighbours (*Balcarres Papers*).

MARY AT THE AGE OF NINE

CHAPTER II

AT THE FRENCH COURT

July 1548—1557

THE brilliance and corruption of the French court at which Mary was brought up is so much a commonplace of history that there is a strong temptation to find it false. It may at least be conceded that the court of Henry II. was neither so brilliant as the court of his father Francis I. nor was it by any means, as coarse, cruel and corrupt as it became later when the widowed Catherine bore sway during the reigns of her sons.

Catherine played indeed no greater part at the court of her husband than she had played during her father-in-law's lifetime. She was merely the mother of the king's children; whatever consideration she received at his hands she owed to the careless, secure kindness, and sense of decorum of her rival Diane de Poictiers. Beautiful, with a peculiar, white, smooth beauty, this remarkable woman kept her hold on the dull heart of her royal lover to the end of his days. She ruled his life, his court, his policy, superintended his children's education and dictated his behaviour to his wife. It has been finely said of her that her influence was blighting and unfruitful as that of the moon which she adopted as her symbol.

A few years before Henry's accession evangelical religion had been in vogue in his household; the psalms of Clement Marot were on every tongue. But

soon religious liberalism shrunk before the dangers and difficulties of Reform; the French court definitely chose the line of reaction and persecution. The love of serious study and the patronage of literature was represented by the second Madame Margaret of France, the learned sister of Henry II., the patroness of Ronsard. The love of art that had glorified the court of Francis survived chiefly in the arts that adorn luxury and pomp, splendid architecture, applied to royal residences, delicate jewelry, and sumptuous bindings, and finely printed books.

With a self-control that does her no honour, Catherine acquiesced in her abasement before the favourite. Her passion for power, thwarted and repressed, instinctively sought to raise up means of influence through her children. From the time they emerged from childhood till they were married she caused her elder daughters Madame Elisabeth and Madame Claude to sleep in a room within hers and to know no authority nor influence but her own. She terrorised her daughters; Margaret—the third Madame Margaret of France—the youngest and most spirited of the children, has recorded that her mother's eye upon her struck a chill of fear to her heart.

Of her father, the king, her reminiscences are charmingly genial. She describes herself at the age of five as sitting on his knee and discussing her boy lovers.

The royal children had an establishment of their own, and it was an amiable trait in the king that he liked to pay them visits when "he could have them all to himself." He showed the greatest eagerness to see the little Queen of Scots when in August 1548 she arrived at St Germain-en-laye where the court

DIANE OF POICTIERS

THE DAUPHIN

was residing. He was enchanted with the beautiful child. According to Brantôme she spoke in her native speech, rendering its harshness musical by her sweet voice. Nor did she suffer from shyness. "I find her and the Dauphin as familiar as if they had known each other all their lives," wrote the king. It was probably the delicate little boy of four and a half who required most to be put at his ease.

Diseased and mean-looking from his birth Francis, like many another frail little boy, had an imagination preoccupied with the romance of weapons and of warfare. There is a pretty letter dictated by him at the age of five in which he thanks the Duke of Guise for the gift of a little suit of armour and challenges him to a single combat. In this he hopes to have the favour "d'une dame belle et honnête qui est votre nièce."

The brilliant beauty and vitality of Mary Stuart distinguished her from the ailing, neurotic children of Catherine. Though the four little Scottish Maries were removed for a time that she might the quicker learn French, she had no lack of companions. Thirty-seven children of the nobility shared the studies and sports of the children of France. So large a party involved an army of household servants. Twelve butlers with ten assistants looked after the cellars, the kitchen staff amounted to over fifty, wardrobes and stables were manned on a similar scale. It throws a curious light on the habits of the time that there was but one water-carrier for all this crowd, while, in some years, only two laundresses accomplished all the washing required. Doctors and apothecaries were attached to the household, and one could wish that a place had been found near Mary's person for a certain

honest Scotch doctor, named William Bog, warmly recommended to Mary of Guise. The letter of recommendation insists on the importance of a doctor who could "diagnose Scotch temperament"—"You know what a difference there is between a doctor of one's own country and a foreigner. My friend besides being of that nation is both a skilful druggist and doctor, and above all a lover of religion and of his country's liberty." Mary was at all times familiarly kind and affectionate with those of her own household; a good, wise, middle-class Scotchman like the excellent Bog might have given her an insight into "Scottish temperament" and their "love of their country's liberty" which would have saved her from fatal blundering. Almoners, priests, confessors made part of the household, also tutors and masters of music and dancing.

Classical learning was in those days one of the privileges of princesses and noble ladies. They were supposed to read and write Latin, to know enough Greek to justify the presence of fine editions on their bookshelves and to talk the languages of the principal European courts. Now as these royal and noble ladies were often married at the age of twelve and were little older when they appeared at court, a great deal of education must have been compressed into these early years, even if tutors were complacent and ready to make a royal road. The eternal prerogative of childhood, the right to be a child, was fatally denied to all those poor, important little ladies.

In an age of learned women, Mary was no prodigy. She had not the pure love of letters of Jane Gray, nor could she, like Elisabeth, exchange courtesies in Greek with heads of colleges. But with her fine wit and

high spirit she took kindly to her studies. She had to write priggish little Latin themes, moral reflections on the duties of princes; even copy books were made to minister to that self-importance which cruelly robbed little royalties of "the first garden of their simpleness." At thirteen she entertained king and court by an harangue in Latin, and though the arguments might be the arguments of her tutor the voice and manner were the same that years after forced her Scottish subjects to exclaim, "Vox Dianæ. . . . Was there ever orator spake so properly and so sweetly?" Still greater was the charm of her intimate conversation. Even as a child she would entertain the king by her wise and witty conversation, "just like a woman of five and twenty," writes the exultant Cardinal of Lorraine.

The encouragement of learning, the patronage of poets, even the practice of verse-making and especially the collecting books in beautiful bindings, were all fashions in vogue at court. We have still an inventory of the books Mary brought to Scotland with her, books which the ignorant carelessness of Murray and Morton suffered to be dispersed and destroyed. Among these books many are of a religious complexion, controversial as well as devotional. One is surprised to find Calvin's Institutes among them, but the cardinal was determined that his niece should know the reformed doctrines so as to be able to refute them. It was not from his mother that James VI. was to inherit his passion for theological subtleties. "She could not reason," she once told Randolph, "but she knew what she ought to believe"—an unassailable position into which many a simple gentlewoman is glad to follow her! If she did not readily commit

herself to her own confession of faith, she had an instinct for the weak places in her adversaries' argument that no dialectic could have bettered.

Religious orthodoxy was one of the assets of the Guises. The old Duchess Antoinette—in her private relations a faithful, tender-hearted woman—carried on religious persecution on her estates with single-minded conviction. Her two daughters were abbesses of convents. The cardinal, the churchman, though a materialist and worldling, recognised the advantage to his house of being the acknowledged champions of Catholicism, but the soldier, Duke Francis, had in addition to the family orthodoxy some genuine religious instinct. He could pause in the heat of battle to urge a dying comrade to make his peace with God.

Her uncles therefore saw to it that, in Mary's education, "God was worshipped after the old fashion." Loyalty, in Mary's nature, was so strong a virtue that it redeems even the sins that have been laid to her door. The same faithfulness she showed to her kinsfolk, her friends and the humblest of her servants, she showed also to the religion in which she had been brought up. "The religion which I profess," she was to assure Throckmorton on the eve of her departure for Scotland, "I take to be most acceptable to God; neither do I know or desire to know any other. Constancy becometh all folk well but none better than princes . . . and especially in matters of religion." Only once in her life was she to waver in this constancy. It is the measure of her infatuation for Bothwell that she consented to marry him with Protestant rites.

A larger space on Mary's shelves was occupied by classical than by religious books. Most of the Latin classics and a creditable number of Greek are in this

THE CARDINAL OF LORRAINE

fascinating collection. History too is largely represented. She had a special liking for this study. When she was in Scotland she read portions of Livy every day with Master George Buchanan. In captivity the English Chronicles were her favourite reading.

It is, however, to the lighter volumes, the romances and poetry, that one turns to learn what one can of Mary's personal tastes. Probably the best loved of her books and the most frequently read were the volumes of contemporary French poetry. The two most important poets, Joachim du Bellay and Ronsard, were attached by special ties to Mary. Du Bellay had been on board the ship that brought her as a child from Scotland. As a page Ronsard had accompanied her father's first wife, Queen Madeleine, to Scotland. In the dulness of a long winter at Holyrood he made his first acquaintance with Homer. The courtly, gray-haired poet had a special kindness for the Scottish queen. In the most conventional of Ronsard's verses there is a charm fresh and sweet and rich as of a summer garden. He addresses many poems to Mary; he praises her fair, slender hands, her white body born in spring among sister lilies; when she goes away he likens France to a field despoiled of its flowers, a wood stripped of its green mantle, a ring that has lost its precious stone.

Mary herself wrote verses as a graceful pastime; a fatal pastime it was to prove, luring Chastelard on to fatuous presumption and weaving evidence against herself and Bothwell. Among her books is "Ane book of French sonnettes in writ." One wonders if these were her own or Chastelard's. She had several volumes of romances, nine at least of Amadis of Gaul, Ogier the Dane, Launcelot of the Lake and others,

mostly apparently in Italian. These endless fantastic stories into which Spanish and Italian fancy had elaborated the earlier mediæval tales, were evidently as familiar to the young people of the French court as the stories of "Ivanhoe" and "The Talisman" to children of our day. The Venetian ambassador gives a pretty picture of Mary and the Dauphin, and the other noble children playing at these romances in the glades of a wood. There were also lighter tales in Mary's library, the "Decameron," the "Heptameron," and collections like "Le jardin de Plaisance" and "La mer des Histoires."

These tales her ladies would read aloud to her while she worked, for the slender hands—"votre longue et grêsle et délicate main" is Ronsard's lovely phrase—were rapid and skilful in all sorts of needlework. Some of her embroidery is still in existence. We can still touch the gauntlet embroidered for Darnley, the leading strings she made for her baby at Stirling, the altar cloth she sewed in the long winter at Loch Leven. She touched her lute delicately, though Melville acknowledges with less skill than Elisabeth. Dancing in that age was a serious art, half-dramatic and wholly rhythmical and stately, and Mary excelled in dancing.

Hunting was a passion with the Valois kings. Frail little Francis was to wear out his courtiers in the field as relentlessly as his vigorous grandfather. From an early age the royal children followed the chase on their little "haquenés." We even know the names of Mary's favourite horses; Bravane and Madame Real.

The cardinal directed Mary's education in all points. Her diet, her jewels, her servants, all received minute

FRANCIS OF LORRAINE, DUKE OF GUISE
(Dumoustier?)

attention. He was the friend and close ally of Diane de Poictiers; between him and the Queen there was mutual suspicion and constant tacit opposition. It was with the aim of withdrawing her from Catherine's influence that he persuaded his sister to give her daughter a separate establishment. Thus at the age of twelve Mary began her lifelong task of assuaging jealousies, reconciling enemies, distributing favours, reading character and keeping a wary reticence under the sweet frankness of her manners.

There is a letter to her mother written when she was fifteen, full of the perplexities of her position. Lady Fleming was no longer her governess, Catherine and Diane had been equally resolved that the fascinating Scottish lady should remain no longer in the neighbourhood of the susceptible king. The French governess who succeeded her was elderly, ailing, jealous and a mischief-maker. She had taken umbrage at Mary's open-handedness. "A man's life consisteth not in the things that he hath," but there are many women who out of their possessions create much of the charm and individuality of their lives. We read with mere amusement of the three thousand dresses left by Queen Elisabeth, or of the cloth of gold under which Margaret of Navarre could hardly walk, but Mary Stuart's possessions seem to keep the warmth of her touch, the charm of her personality. Her jewels are curiously interwoven with her history. The gross of buttons with Diana's crescent moon in black and white; Elisabeth's diamond heart worn as her sole ornament at a Twelfth Night party at Holyrood; the diamond ring left to Darnley because "with this ring he married me"; the mourning ring with white enamel tears, sent to Bothwell; the "great

Harry," the diamond Lady Murray embezzled and refused to part with; have these not all the romance of magical gifts in a fairy-tale? There is something of the same witchery even in her clothes. This is partly due to the generous habit she had of distributing them to her friends and servants. Later on her French stores at Holyrood were to provide wedding gowns and holiday suits for all her friends, but even as a child she had this habit of open-handed giving. This it was that excited the irritable jealousy of Madame de Paroy. Probably there was an unwritten etiquette which gave certain perquisites to the governess, and this Mary chose to disregard. Yet the special act of generosity was innocent enough. She had bestowed her robes to make altar cloths in the two convents where her aunts presided. Later on she was to reverse the process and cut up beautiful old altar cloths to make doublets for Bothwell.

MARY STUART AS A GIRL

CHAPTER III

MARRIAGE WITH THE DAUPHIN

April 1558—December 1560

AS early as 1557 when Mary was only fifteen and the Dauphin younger, the French king was eager for the marriage.

During the whole sixteenth century the external policy of France knew one principal aim, to counterbalance the power of Spain. Now Philip of Spain by his marriage with Mary Tudor had added strength to his position. It secured him a safe passage at all times to his possessions in the low countries, it placed the ships and armies of England at the disposition of Spain. The French king was forced to find a counterweight in a closer alliance with Scotland.

Ignoring the passionate jealousy of the Scots of all foreign domination, Frenchmen were slipping into the habit of looking on Scotland as an appanage of the French crown. Mary of Guise had her instructions to rule on this supposition. When in 1551 she paid her one visit to her own country, she was received with enthusiasm as a good soldier might be who was holding a dangerous frontier post. Before the year was out her proud, irritable, suspicious Scotch following were quarrelling with their French hosts and the king was weary of a guest whose affairs required so much help financial and diplomatic. It was the last time Mary of Guise saw her daughter. In 1554 Mary, having been declared of age, appointed her mother

Regent in Scotland. Arran, the governor had accepted the affront, at the price of various bribes. The French king had bestowed on him the title of the Duke of Chatelherault. Henceforth we shall hear him generally styled "the Duke."

The queen-mother's rule failed as signally in its best right endeavours as in its worst mistakes. She lost popularity by her efforts to enforce law and order. "The people used to love me and now they wish I were dead," she wrote once to her brothers with clear, sad perception. Tolerant by nature she yet never departed from her brother's instructions, and when, in 1555, Knox first crystallised the dispersed Protestants into a coherent party, she placed herself firmly in opposition. But her most fatal mistake was that she bestowed all the posts of importance on Frenchmen, thus embittering most of the Scottish nobility. In 1556 the cardinal was urgent that she should come to France to arrange the preliminaries of Mary's marriage, but the state of affairs in Scotland did not permit of her absence.

In 1558 the star of the Guises was resplendent. Duke Francis had checked the victorious march of Spain on French soil and had wrested Calais from the English, thus healing a wound in the national honour that had been bleeding for two centuries. In a further respect the loss of Calais to the English had heightened the value of the Scotch alliance. Mary Tudor had received a blow under which neither her gloomy spirit nor her wearied body seemed able to bear up; Mary Tudor dying childless would leave a disputed succession and men began to speculate.

No Catholic could regard the daughter of Anne Bullen as legitimate, and Mary Stuart, the grand-

daughter of Margaret Tudor and great granddaughter of Henry VII., was next in succession. One can imagine the glad excitement with which Mary Stuart began to recognise herself as heir to a third crown. She was old enough and high-spirited enough to know the part she had to play in the fortunes of her House, for at this time all her loyalty belonged to the Guises. Scotland, remote both in space and in childish memory, was only valuable for what it enabled her to bestow.

In the autumn of 1557 the Scottish parliament had consented to the marriage; in the following April eight commissioners, bishops and lords (and among them the Lord James Stuart, Mary's half-brother) were sent from Scotland to represent their country and to safeguard its liberties. The country was to keep its independence and to be ruled by its own "lovable laws and customs"; failing Mary the crown was, in simple justice, to pass to the Duke of Chatelherault and his heirs. The agreement was signed with the less demur that there was no intention of carrying out the provisions of it. Several days before Mary had signed three papers. One of these, in the case of her dying without children, made over Scotland and her prospective rights in England unconditionally to the French king. Another undertook that the king should be reimbursed for all his expenses in the defence of Scotland during Mary's minority. In a third Mary disavowed any agreement that might be come to with the Scotch commissioners. These commissioners were all strangers to Mary; there was no one near her to warn her that nations—least of all the Scottish nation—were not property that could be passed from hand to hand like jewels, no one to call up in her any loyal or romantic feeling about the kingdom of her fathers.

On one point the commissioners were firm, they refused to grant Francis the crown matrimonial, which would have put his authority in Mary's kingdom on an equality with her's. The sudden death of four of the commissioners at Dieppe from "Italian posset or French figs" was sinisterly interpreted, but there seems no adequate motive for such an atrocity unless some of them were supposed to have learned the nature of Mary's secret convention with the French king.

The marriage of Mary and the Dauphin, joyous and prolonged like any other royal wedding, is to us chiefly noticeable from the contrast it forms with the curiously hasty marriage with Darnley, and that ominous early morning in May, when in defiance of her people and the disillusionment of her own heart, she plighted her troth to Bothwell. This first marriage at least was triumphant, offering the fairest prospects. Henry II. "joyeux et humain" made the wedding party show themselves to the populace of Paris, a populace always devoted to the brilliant Guises. The princes and nobles who played their parts in the evening pageant were all young, all kinsfolk or familiar friends. One thing only was ominous. Half way through the banquet the bride complained of the weight of her crown and had to lay it aside.

In the following November Mary Tudor died and, unquestioned, Elisabeth ascended the throne. Henry II. might listen complacently to court poets prophesying that his daughter-in-law would have:

> "une couronne encore dérechef
> Pour joindre ensemble à la terre écossaise,"

but impoverished by the wars with Spain and en-

grossed in suppressing heresy in his own dominions, he could only reserve his right of remonstrance to another day. Meanwhile he signified his protest by causing the Dauphiness and her husband to assume the arms of England quartered with those of France and Scotland. These arms were flaunted at tournaments and on other public occasions. All through her life Mary was to pay for this idle decoration.

On April 2, at Cateau Cambresis a peace was patched up which included Spain, France, England and Scotland. Mary signing the special treaty between England and Scotland subscribed herself Queen of Scotland, England and Ireland. Cardinal Granvelle and the Duke of Alva exchanged smiles, "This will cause new trouble before long," said one to the other.

Troubles indeed were rising for Mary in more quarters than one. For some years past a certain forcible, fervid, iron-grey minister had been at Geneva absorbing from John Calvin the scheme of salvation, and revolving in his own passionate Scottish heart democratic views of the rights of nations and the limits of the authority of princes. The importance of Knox, "the Reformer of a Kingdom," is out of all proportion to that of other persons in the story. His was to be a living influence in the national life of Scotland long after Mary and Darnley and Bothwell were dust, and their loves and sorrows and sins a tale that is told. In that tale indeed Knox was to play a part — the part of a determined and pitiless opponent. More than any one he was to stand between the young Queen and any chance she might have had of understanding her

people. His passionate rancour against her justifies her failing to give a patient hearing to the religion he taught.

It was as the author of a pamphlet pouring contempt on her sex and impugning her right as a queen that Mary first heard of Knox. Driven from England by the persecution under Mary Tudor, resentful of a personal offence given him by Mary of Guise, angrily suspicious of his own young Queen and her bringing up, he had swept them together in a common condemnation and had blown his Blast against "the Monstrous Regiment of Women." On the 10th of May 1559 Knox was back in Scotland. At the end of the month came sudden ominous news to the French court. The Protestant lords and preachers had drawn to a head, menacing rebellion; among the "rascal multitude" rebellion had practically broken out. At Perth, Knox's sermon had been followed by the destruction of altars and the sacking of convents and churches.

No one among the reforming party pretended that they aimed at obtaining toleration for their opinions. They meant to overthrow the existing order of things in the Church, and to expel idolatry. They might for the present keep up forms of respect for the temporal power, but that power would be no check upon their action. Names of weight were involved; the Queen's half-brother Lord James and the Earl of Argyle were the strength of the reforming party. The Duke of Chatelherault, too stupid to hold convictions either way, still hung dubious. His son Arran was still in France, a Captain in the Scots Guards; and Mary—whose habit of prompt action was so often to disconcert her enemies—sent at once to

have him arrested. A strange, moody, excitable creature, Arran had little personal weight, but in certain contingencies he would inherit the Scottish throne. He was young and a Protestant, and politic heads both in England and Scotland were already speculating on the possibility of a marriage which might unite the two kingdoms in defiance of Catholic Europe. Throckmorton, the English ambassador, contrived to smuggle him across the frontier to Geneva, where his ill-balanced nature, ready for any fanaticism, eagerly adopted extremest Calvinism.

The suppression of rebellion in Scotland would have fallen in fitly with Henry's larger scheme of repressing heresy in his own kingdom. At last there was peace between the kingdoms of France and Spain. If each government were at leisure to order religious questions in their several dominions, the future of Protestantism would be black indeed. Fortunately the jealousy of the two powers was too deep-rooted to be removed by treaty or alliance or even by common religious interests. Madame Elisabeth, Mary's best-loved play-fellow, had carried the olive branch between the two countries when, a mere child, she was married to Philip II., the most forbidding of bridegrooms. The marriage of his second little daughter, Madame Renée, had been a triumph for the Guises, for the bridegroom was the head of their house, the Duke of Lorraine. In June Henry was celebrating the marriage of his sister Madame Margaret with the Duke of Savoy. Vain of his dexterity and prowess, Henry tempted fate in the lists till a splinter from the lance of a reluctant opponent entered his brain and dealt a mortal wound.

When courts are ruled by favourites an inevitable and indecent hurry attends the death of kings. The

Guises could hardly await Henry's latest breath. In the middle of the night they roused young Francis from his bed to receive their homage; by the next morning the young couple had their cue, and Mary was prepared "de faire le bec" at the Connêtable and his nephews and the other favourites of the late king. These were left to pay the last honours to dead royalty while their triumphant rivals hurried the royal party off to the Louvre. Stricken with genuine grief and draped in heavy mourning the queen-mother was about to step into the carriage after her son, but even in that moment her instinct of etiquette recognised that her place was changed, and, stepping back, she motioned to her daughter-in-law to go first. Catherine was the more punctilious in her behaviour to Mary because of the rancour she bore her.

During the years when she had been abased and ignored she had amassed experience, gained patience and tenacity, and learnt the weaknesses and secrets of all about her. The Guises were to discover with dismay the strength of her veiled opposition, the subtlety and shamelessness of her intrigues. Towards her daughter-in-law her hostility had a personal edge. Mary Stuart had her tongue and her manners in such prudent control that when she spoke out recklessly and freely—as she did on several occasions in her life—it was with the deliberate purpose to wound. "Once," writes the Venetian ambassador, "she told her mother-in-law that she would never be anything but a merchant's daughter." In her dealings with Queen Elisabeth also, Mary never forgot that she herself was royal or noble to the last of her quarterings, while Elisabeth was but Anne Bullen's daughter. She could comment with edge on

HENRY II, KING OF FRANCE

Elisabeth's undignified love affairs or her bursts of plebeian temper. She intended, doubtless, that her biting jest on Elisabeth's fatuous flirtation with Lord Robert Dudley should reach her cousin's ears. "The Queen of England" she said, "was about to marry her groom who had killed his wife to make room for her." It was in later times a satisfaction to Catherine and Elisabeth that policy constantly dictated the duty of thwarting the schemes of the sister queen whose victorious grace and confident high-breeding was an implicit insult to both.

There was little joy and brilliance in the eighteen months of Mary's queenship in France. Catherine's heavy black robe and sour face were a cloud on the court. The rivals of the Guises had withdrawn themselves suspicious and resentful. The cardinal was controller of finance; the duke was head of the forces; Mary's will dominated the little king; yet the policy of the three was ineffective. In Scotland the arrival of an efficient French force would have stamped out the rebellion in the autumn of 1559. So half-hearted and suspicious of one another were many of the lords of the congregation that with a small contingent of trained men the regent was keeping them in play. She wrote urgently for effective help, but the Guises, being soldiers and diplomatists, not statesmen, were dazzled with larger ambitions and missed their opportunity. The army they meant to send to Scotland was to be on such a scale that it could proceed to invade England and make good their niece's claim to the crown. Such a force took time to prepare. A fleet had to be brought round from the Mediterranean. Meanwhile English statesmen took alarm and compelled their

reluctant Queen to give aid to the protestant lords, at first secretly, then more or less openly.

There was a curious irony in the position of Elisabeth. As despotic a monarch as her father and as devout a believer in the duty of passive obedience as her successor, her constant policy, from the force of circumstance, was to support rebellion against neighbouring governments, now in Scotland, now in France, now in the Low Countries. Her religious convictions were still to seek but her taste and intelligence were all on the side of a reasonable Catholicism, yet she was to find her allies among the extreme Protestants whose views political and religious she abhorred.

All pretence of peace between the two queens had worn thin by the end of the year. The congregation were openly placing themselves under Elisabeth's protection. Money and men were filtering into Scotland. The regent had been formally deposed.

Arran with his new-fangled Genevan fanaticism had added the weight of his position to the Protestant party. The project of his marriage with Elisabeth was taking definite shape in many minds and behind it were visions of a united kingdom, an established Protestant Church, Scotland loosened from the French alliance, and Mary and her authority whistled down the wind. English ships were in the Forth before Mary's uncle d'Elboeuf had completed his preparation. When at length his fleet started, a winter storm scattered and destroyed his ships; only a handful under the gallant Martigues arrived in the Forth.

In her bitter disappointment and resentment Mary wished to send out another expedition forthwith and to head it in person. But before any steps

were taken unforeseen dangers and difficulties of their own were closing round the Guises. Their rule was detested on all hands. Persecution and the dread of harsher measures were rousing the Huguenots to plans of self-defence. English gold was secretly passing amongst them; the English ambassador was in their confidence. The peace had let loose hordes of idle, penniless officers and soldiers. The greed of the Cardinal refused to recognise their claims, his cowardice forbade their access to court. Here were elements enough of discontent and disorder. In February the king hunting in the neighbourhood of Blois, came on a band of such lawless, landless men. The Cardinal was demoralised by fear. He insisted on the court removing up the Loire to the safer retreat of Amboise. Sailing in barges up the river gay ladies and cavaliers enlivened the time with pageants and masques and singing, while in the background the forces of misery and disorder were silently drawing up against them. It reads like a scene out of the "Decameron." But such forces unfortunately are generally impotent against the compact order of tyrannical authority.

The conspiracy of Amboise, this menacing combination of many elements of discontent against the hated House of Guise, failed through treachery and lack of cohesion. Fair promises were made to the conspirators when they appeared formidable at the very gates of Amboise, promises broken in dastardly fashion on the morrow. Duke Francis crushed the rebellion, but in the wholesale cold-blooded executions which followed we trace the panic-stricken cruelty of the Cardinal. The very Chancellor, who had condemned the conspirators, turned on him at last with

"wicked Cardinal, you damn yourself and all of us along with you."

By an ingenuity of cruelty the victims were brought out for execution in front of the palace windows "to afford pastime to the ladies." Ranged at their ease, as at a play, the boy princes and the royal ladies watched men die—brave and righteous men among them—without any sign of pity or horror. Only one woman's voice was heard pleading for mercy, that of Anne d'Este, the wife of Duke Francis. Nothing that Mary was to find of lawlessness and cruelty in her own country—not even the murder of Riccio in a queen's chamber—can compare with this surfeit of human agony. Nerves and imagination trained in a more humane and reasonable age need not attempt to understand how a girl like Mary Stuart—generous and pitiful in all private relations—looked on at horrors so ghastly even in narrative. Years later Knollys was to say of her—but it was after she had suffered bitter wrong—"She desires above all things to be revenged of her enemies." Of the starving soldiers defrauded of their pay, and citizens persecuted for their religion, she only knew what her uncles told her, that they were enemies who aimed at her life and the lives of her husband and uncles.

But there was another side to the Guises. They inflicted death ruthlessly but (with the exception of the Cardinal), they could meet it fearlessly. To the best of them, to Duke Francis, to Mary of Guise and to her daughter, death was less an ill they had to endure than a deed they had to carry through with honour. Neither the last magnanimous hours of the murdered Francis at Orleans, nor the anxious hours at Jedburgh when Mary Stuart deliberately faced

death and gave her calm considerate directions, were so touching as the lonely death of Mary of Guise in Edinburgh Castle in the June of this year (1560).

In the clear light which approaching death sometimes throws upon the perplexities of life, she admitted that her policy might have been mistaken, was reconciled to her enemies, received with courtesy the Protestant preacher intruded on her, but quietly and faithfully received the last consolations from her own church.

The news of her death had been known at the French court for ten days before any one ventured to tell the young Queen, and so vehement was her grief that she fell seriously ill. "She loved her mother incredibly, much more than daughters usually do," writes the Venetian ambassador sympathetically. The causes for which Mary of Guise had fought, the French alliance and the Catholic faith, were lost causes in Scotland. On the 6th of July a peace was concluded between the French plenipotentiary on the one hand, and Sir William Cecil and Dr Wotten and their Scottish allies on the other. Of necessity it was an irregular triangular sort of treaty. With one clause in it we shall grow so tediously familiar in the course of the story that it is necessary to understand what it involved. Mary and her husband were "*in all times coming* to abstain from bearing the title and arms of the kingdom of England or Ireland." At every juncture the English government were to urge the ratification of the treaty, at every juncture Mary found plausible reasons for delaying it. Her claim on the English crown was the highest card in her hand. Various possible events might upset the throne of the illegitimate and usurping Elisabeth; her own

Catholic subjects might rise against her ; some change in European politics might induce Philip to withdraw his protection from the Protestant Queen. The words "in all times" might be taken to debar Mary and her children from their lawful succession in case of Elisabeth dying childless, and Mary affected to believe that the words were used in this sense. Later on, Lord James was to propose a reasonable compromise. Mary was to renounce all claim to the English throne while it was occupied by Elisabeth or any lawful children she might have, and in return, Elisabeth, failing offspring of her own, was to acknowledge Mary and her children as next in succession.

Elisabeth was as obstinate in the matter of the succession, as Mary in that of the ratification. In the first place, Gloriana could not bear to think of herself as mortal, or to imagine England with any other monarch but herself. It would be like hanging up her winding sheet to name a successor, she told Lethington peevishly. In the next place to nominate a Catholic successor would have been to give a head and purpose to all the restless and discontented elements in the country ; a very real danger. Finally, whatever her own wishes had been, men like Cecil, Bedford and Bacon would have persistently and successfully opposed the nomination of the Scottish Queen.

On this deadlock between the two queens, the tragedy of Mary's life was to hinge.

CHAPTER IV

LE DEUIL BLANC

December 1560—August 1561

BETWEEN partnership with her uncles in their bid for power and vigilant attention to the actions of her mother-in-law, Mary Stuart acquired that cool knowledge of men and affairs which was to astonish English politicians. She had not been two months in Scotland before Randolph was to find that "all the policy in all the chief and best-practised heads in France; whatso craft, falsehood or deceit there is in all the subtle brains in Scotland is either fresh in that woman's memory or she can bring it back with a wet finger."

She knew courts, she knew nothing of national life. It was the most serious of her misfortunes that with a heart so generous, a spirit so frank as hers, she was never to lose (and in losing to find) her own life in oneness with the life of her people. Still more curious was the contrast between her precocious knowledge of the world and her ignorance of her own nature, its passions and instinct of self-surrender. She had grown up among the Guises; she knew no plan of life other than the one they followed so consistently. She could not suspect that her own nature was more Stuart than Guise. Beneath her prudence and ambition lay that reckless romance which impelled more than one member of her race to wreck cause or kingdom for the sake of passion.

She was a Stuart, but it was not for nothing that her grandmother had been the sister of Henry VIII. The coarser Tudor elements, the infatuation of love chafing at delay or obstacle, the bursts of unrestrained anger, the unbridled violence of speech, these only emerged once or twice in the life of Mary, but they were the fatal elements of her character.

In her dignified and prosperous youth, these hidden forces only showed in delicate and lovable instincts. She was warmly affectionate, with a need and infinite capacity for devoting herself to those she loved. Her childish letters to her mother eagerly protest her love and obedience. It is curious to find the same desire to follow another's will, in the letters addressed to Norfolk, in that last and most shadowy of Mary's love affairs. It is because this note is so emphatic and reiterated in the Casket Letters that one doubts the capacity of the forger to catch anything so subtly characteristic.

She seems to have accepted her first marriage as the women of her time and rank mostly did, simply as a means to greatness. The marriage did not last long. Francis had suffered chronically from a painful and repulsive malady. The insanely long hunting expeditions, which were his one form of energy, kept him in a constant state of fever. In November 1560, the court was at Orleans. Great events were pending; the Guises were playing for high stakes; their rival, the Prince de Condé, was in prison, condemned to death; his brother, the King of Navarre, was in daily fear of arrest. Suddenly Francis fell alarmingly ill. The Guises concealed the gravity of the situation; day and night they were in attendance; their hurried meals were served in an anteroom. There is nothing

LE DEUIL BLANC

MARY IN HER WIDOW'S DRESS

so hideous as rivalries, suspicions and stifled dislike meeting in a sickroom. Night after night with bitter ceremoniousness Mary and Catherine disputed the right to watch by the dying boy lying speechless and troubled between them. On the night of the fifth December, Francis died. At midnight Catherine called a meeting of council, the Guises secured themselves in their lodgings, the Bourbons breathed again, courtiers hastened to transfer their allegiance and the widowed girl of eighteen was left with the dead. The Venetian ambassador — the same who had sympathetically noted Mary's sorrow for her mother—wrote now, "So by degrees every one will forget the death of the late king except the young Queen who is no less noble-minded than beautiful."

On the following day with dignified promptitude Mary restored the royal diamonds to her brother-in-law, assumed the white mourning of a Queen of France and shut herself up for forty days in rooms draped with black and lighted only by torches. She had life to begin all over again; she was just eighteen, and the world—*her* world—had strangely changed in twenty-four hours. The young husband she had lost had been her play-fellow, he had loved her, and, in spite of the inequality of their natures she had felt affection for him. There is a little poem of hers, singularly melodious and tender, written, so Brantôme tells us, on this occasion.

She writes of herself as one :—

"Qui en mon doux printemps
Et fleur de ma jeunesse
Toutes les peines sens
D'une extrême tristesse

Et en rien n'ai plaisir
Qu'en regret et désire
* * * *
Si en quelque séjour
Soit en bois ou en pré
Soit sur l'aube du jour
Ou soit sur la vesprée
Sans cesse mon cœur sent
Le regret d'un absent."

But the chief part of her sorrow was unaffected regret that she had fallen from her great estate, her main anxiety was how to order her affairs—and in her case this meant the bestowal of herself in marriage —that she might recover her position. It was at this moment that Elisabeth was outraging the feelings of her responsible servants by her flirtation with Dudley. Throckmorton, her ambassador in France, was not unwilling to point a moral at his mistress when he wrote of Mary, "She more esteemeth the continuation of her honour and to marry one that may uphold her to be great than she passeth to please her fancy." The prudence and dignity of the white young widow impressed Throckmorton, but what appealed most strongly to him as a straightforward, high-spirited man, often galled by Elisabeth's caprice and disloyalty, was her modesty, the fact that she thought herself "not to be too wise but is content to be ruled by good counsel and wiser men." Perhaps Throckmorton admired this womanly dependence less when Mary resisted both him and Bedford urging the ratification of the Treaty of Leith on the plea that she could take no step without consulting her Scottish council.

It soon became clear to Mary that there was no place for her at the French court. She was of no further use to her uncles, nay, if their only chance lay

in affecting an alliance with Catherine, the presence of the rival dowager, young, beautiful and sure of a train of followers, would embarrass their action. A visit to her sister-in-law, the prosperous self-satisfied little Duchess of Lorraine, convinced Mary how little she herself was fitted to take a second place. Even in the first weeks a crowd of possible suitors all over Europe were turning their eyes towards Joinville whither the young widow had withdrawn with her grandmother.

Beautiful, self-confident and accustomed from childhood to the foremost place, Mary imagined nothing lower than the world-wide empire which marriage with the heir of Spain would secure for her. For five years her imagination was dazzled by hopes of this foremost position in Europe; if she ever thought of inquiring into the personal qualities of the Spanish prince, diplomatic reticence must have been complete, for at no point was she deterred by the consideration that Don Carlos was a degenerate imbecile. Two more of her suitors were to end in madness, Eric, King of Sweden and the Earl of Arran. The latter, recently rejected by Elisabeth, hastened on the first opportunity to lay his heart at his cousin's disdainful feet. Two sons of the Emperor were among the aspirants, also the King of Denmark. The light-hearted King of Navarre was pondering whether he could find a pretext to divorce his uncomfortably superior wife, Jeanne d'Albret, and marry the beautiful dowager. In Yorkshire the restless, ambitious Lady Lennox was already considering how she could commend her fair, long-limbed son, Lord Darnley, to his cousin's favour. And like the two jealous step-sisters of this princess of many lovers,

Catherine and Elisabeth were intent on thwarting her schemes. A King of Spain with sovereign rights in Scotland and a claim on the English crown was as fearful to Catherine as to Elisabeth. The English Queen had already made up her mind and was instructing her Scottish allies that Mary must only be suffered to marry a Scottish or English nobleman who would add nothing to her importance.

The months passed, no decision was come to, and Mary felt more and more that there was no place for her in France. The pressing question arose: was there room for her in Scotland, her native kingdom? The Venetian ambassador wrote pityingly of her as deprived of the crown of France and with little hope of recovering that of Scotland. In the last year indeed, Scotland had been drifting complacently into a sort of commonwealth. Master Knox saw in it already such a theocracy as he read into the Old Testament, such as he had seen with his own eyes at Geneva. Without a misgiving he was prepared to be the inspired guide of this commonwealth, to dictate its policy, to cleanse its land of idolatry and to compel righteousness of life and purity of religion. "Devout imagination" Maitland of Lethington had called such visions, in his clear-sighted witty fashion, but it was a "devout imagination" which was stamping itself with fatal distinctness on the consciences and brains of a compact body of middle-class Scotsmen —a class which seems to have sprung into being at the voice of Knox. This was the section of her people whom Mary was never to conciliate.

By gifts, of which they were insatiably greedy, and by delicate womanly flattery of their Scottish pride, she was easily to appease the suspicions of her

CATHERINE DE MEDICI

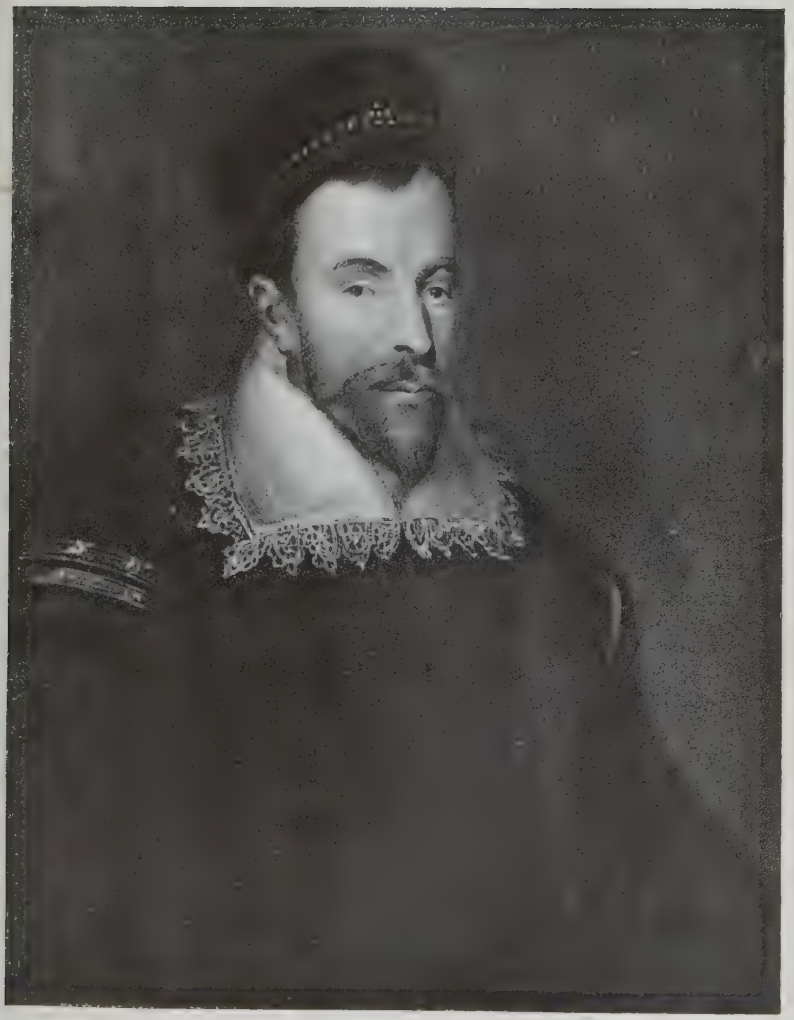
nobility; the voices of the "rascal multitude" were won without difficulty to cry "God bless that sweet face" by the frank, smiling beauty of the young Queen. But the bulk of serious burghers and their wives listened week after week with sour satisfaction to Knox denouncing from the pulpit her "dancing and skipping," and the "stinking pride" of her "targetted tails." For Mary, full of ambitions — Spanish marriage, English succession—or possessed by her more fatal dream of love and happiness, these sober-suited people hardly existed, yet they and their crude, sincere instinct of conduct proved to be the unregarded stone which, falling on her, was to grind her to powder.

It was the strength of the position of the Lord James, Mary's half-brother, that he represented the faith and aspirations of this class. The change in religion had given James Stuart the position of power and responsibility he coveted, for which he was fitted, and from which he had seemed excluded by the accident of his birth. The son of the woman James V. had nearly married, the woman he had loved most dearly, Lord James had a position quite different from that of Lords John and Robert, Mary's other half-brothers, wild young bloods who were to take cordially to their royal half-sister and to fill her court with noise and brawling, love-making and cheerfulness. His position so near the throne, yet with no such claims as gave fictitious importance to Chatelherault and Lennox, explains much in the character of James. He had the capacity of a ruler without the generous instincts of a king; he had a conscience but at no point of his life did he show any warmth of heart; he served the cause of God as he recognised it but never arrived at

indifference to the tangible rewards of land and money. He owed it to the good Protestants who believed in him to be jealous over his reputation for righteousness, and if he profited by other men's crimes he was careful to remain in ignorance of them. Serious by nature, he felt at home in the austere walk and conversation which Protestantism was rapidly grafting on to the fierceness of Scottish life, a walk and conversation to which his colleague, Maitland of Lethington, hardly made a pretence of conforming.

Lethington was one of a long line of Scotsmen who have never felt quite at home till they have found themselves on the English side of the Border. The *perfervidum ingenium* of their countrymen is a weariness to the taste and critical instincts of such men, and a constant temptation to their sense of humour. At the court of Elisabeth, Lethington was in his element. "A Scottish Cecil" the French ambassador called him; Elisabeth gracefully described him as "the flower of the wits of Scotland." If Knox accepted the English alliance because it furthered "the religion," Lethington accepted Protestantism as a means of drawing the two countries nearer together. That Scotland should take her place among the great civilised states was his enlightened political aim, and this she could best do in close alliance with England. With this view he had tried to further the marriage of Elisabeth with Arran, just as later, with the same view, he strove to have Mary recognised as Elisabeth's heir.

Arran, the suitor of two reigning sovereigns, was singularly unfit for the important place into which he was being pushed. His religious fanaticism was part of a generally unsettled mental condition; his father's



MAITLAND OF LETHINGTON

penuriousness stood in the way of the young man's dignity and popularity.

These three men, with Knox behind them, were guiding affairs in Scotland when Mary resolved to return to her own kingdom.

Mary of Guise is supposed to have prepared a written document for her daughter's use, summing up the characteristics of all the leading noblemen of Scotland. If written in the last year of her life, it can hardly have been creditable to most of them, but one man would certainly have stood well in those pages, James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell. This "glorious and hazardous young man" was the only one of the nobles of whom Mary of Guise could have said that he had been both faithful and efficient in her cause. He had waylaid and carried off a consignment of money secretly sent from England to the Lords of the Congregation; when the days were darkening round the dying Queen he had arrived at the French court to urge the need of further succours. At a time when the Protestant faith, in its first earnestness, was calling on all men to purify their lives, it is a whimsical fact that this reckless, sensual swash-buckler—as regardless of the honour of women as of the lives of men—should never, either for fear or favour, have deviated from the Protestantism he professed.

In April two envoys from Scotland reached Mary where she was staying at Vitry in Champagne within two days of each other. One, John Leslie, a young ecclesiastic, came on behalf of the Catholics in Scotland and with definite proposals from the Catholic Earl of Huntly that she would land at Aberdeen and trust herself and her cause to him and the inchoate northern forces he had at his command. For all his bluster and

boasting Mary knew Huntly to be fickle and ineffectual. A day later than Leslie, arrived Lord James, the accredited envoy of the Parliament. Leslie had warned Mary against her brother, had even urged his being detained in France, but Mary had received other and more prudent counsels. The Frenchmen recently come from Scotland, her mother's old friend d'Oysel and the soldierly Martigues who had starved gallantly behind the walls of Leith, were convinced that she should frankly ally herself with the ruling faction and use the services of Lord James.

For four years this strangely situated brother and sister were to act in concert; she was to follow his suggestions and heap honours and wealth upon him. He was to affect to be her protector and to espouse her interests, yet one doubts if there was ever a movement of cordiality or confidence between them. At this first meeting Mary frankly avowed her policy: she would refuse to ratify the treaty, she would discontinue the alliance with England, she would marry some foreign prince. Lord James noted her conversation and a few days later reported it all to Throckmorton. No wonder the English ambassador urged his mistress to reward substantially so good a friend.

Mary's frankness argued no simple-minded confidence in her half-brother, but rather a bold determination that from the beginning her subjects should know what to expect. She would not repeat her mother's mistake and rule Scotsmen with the help of French advisers and soldiers. Unlike that mother she was no alien but their native princess, the daughter of their kings. Once and again, at the end of her troubled life, she declared that her last words should be those of a daughter of the Church and a Queen of

Scotland. She might have blazoned these words as her device from the beginning. She was going among a people who had defied her authority and discarded her religion, without any alien support, trusting entirely to her natural authority and innate courage.

Three of her uncles and many French gentlemen were to escort her to Scotland, but purely as a guard of honour and pledged to an early return. The journey alone offered dangers enough to daunt a less resolute woman. To secure her passage through the narrow seas Mary sent her ambassador to ask for a safe conduct from Elisabeth with promise of accommodation if she were driven by stress of weather to land on the English coast. It was little enough to demand; there was peace between the two countries; but when the request was made by Mary's ambassador Elisabeth refused it with a burst of passion in the presence of the whole court. Afterwards, it is true, she sent a message that if Mary would ratify the treaty she might have free passage through England and the queens might meet in friendly conference. The difficulties Elisabeth afterwards threw in the way of all proposed meetings give one the measure of her sincerity in this invitation. She had the habit of making generous proposals when she had taken security against their being accepted.

Mary received the first affront with admirable dignity. There must have been extraordinary lucidity and grace in her speech. Throckmorton, Randolph and Knox have all reported long dialogues, and with how much faithfulness is proved by the fact that in almost every case they leave the victory with her. Throckmorton's interest and admiration are evident

from the small space occupied by his counter-arguments. Mary had a genius for putting her opponents in the wrong, and on no one did she exercise it with finer skill than Elisabeth. When she received Throckmorton she dismissed her attendants "not knowing," she explained with some edge, "my own infirmity, nor how far I may with my passions be transported, and not liking to have so many witnesses of my passions as the Queen your mistress was content to have when she talked with M. d'Oysel." As to the ratification, her reasoning was clear and pointed. The original treaty had been drawn up in the name of her late husband and herself; circumstances had changed; as independent Queen of Scotland she would sign no treaty without the advice of her Scottish Council; her uncles being Frenchmen might have no part in her councils. On that same evening, when the English ambassador came to take his leave, her mood had changed. She was as dignified as before, but there was a girlish pathos in her demeanour. It may have been reaction from the effort of the morning, it may have been a dramatic pose, it may have been that the danger and loneliness of her lot had swept over her soul. She seemed to realise the unkindness of her cousin's action. She trusted that she would not need to land in England, but if she did fall into her cousin's hands, she said, "she may then do her pleasure and make sacrifice of me. Peradventure that casualty might be better for me than to live; in this matter God's will be fulfilled." But in a lighter tone she added that she trusted all might yet be well. Then, in the curiously frank manner of the time, she embraced Throckmorton and said good-bye. The contrast with Elisabeth was complete when, next

day, Mary was careful to send him the present forgotten in the hurry of the farewell.

On August 15th she set sail from Calais.

Brantôme, who tells us the story of her passage, was in her train, admiring, obsequious, letting no picturesque detail escape his notice; Bothwell may have been there, with his soldierly swagger and rough, arresting, forcible face, undistinguished as yet from other mettlesome young men; Damville was there, the Connêtable's son, a declared lover of the Queen, and in his train, a rash, inflammable, young poet Chastelard.

There is a charm of naturalness and individuality about every reported action of Mary. As long as the coast of France was visible she leaned on the bulwarks, the big tears falling unrestrained. Her ladies succumbed to the discomforts of the sea, but she, wholly given up to her emotion, insisted on having a couch dressed for her on deck. Thence, sitting up at dawn next morning she looked her last at the low grey coast-line of receding France.

The ship was a great galley rowed by wretched prisoners chained to the oar, men whose sufferings no one regarded; but Mary, claiming her royal prerogative of spreading content and happiness wherever she came, insisted that no blow should be struck in the ship as long as she was on board. Yet this same girl had seen unmoved the torments of the victims of Amboise! The one incident gives us the measure of her natural goodness of heart, the other the intensity of the religious and political rancours of the time.

CHAPTER V

MARY'S RETURN TO SCOTLAND

August 1561—January 1562

A COLD, dark morning in a Scotch August, an easterly haar creeping over the sea, the squalid little port of Leith hardly alive and stirring at seven o'clock in the morning, and, three miles off, the Capital taken at unawares, all unprepared to welcome the returning Queen; such was Mary's return to her native kingdom. Similar mischances were not unknown to Royalty in the sixteenth century. Two years before, Madame Elisabeth, on her way to the proudest throne in Europe, had been storm-stayed in the Pyrenees, and between the delays of Spanish etiquette and the heaping snow-drifts had run the risk of falling short of supplies.

For several hours on that cheerless August day, Mary and her party had to wait in the house of Captain Lambie, a citizen of Leith. In the course of the morning noblemen, hastily advertised of her presence, hurried singly or in companies from Edinburgh to welcome the Queen. Lord James was one, and Argyle (who had married one of Mary's half-sisters), Huntly also, and Atholl and others of the Catholics. Brantôme declares that the Queen shed tears over the sorry hackneys hurriedly collected to carry the party to Holyrood, but he is probably reflecting his own feelings rather than the Queen's. Mortification she may have felt, but courage and

courtesy, her two prevailing instincts, would have forbidden such an expression of feeling.

The ample plenishing that Mary was bringing with her did not arrive till a month later; meanwhile the modest luxury Holyrood could afford consisted of furniture that had belonged to Mary of Guise. In prosperous times luxury may be reckoned to double with each generation, but Mary's possessions were more than three times as numerous as her mother's. Instead of nine beds she had forty-five, thirty-six Turkey carpets instead of two, and arras cloths of state and other furniture in like proportions. She had the finest jewels of any lady in Europe. All this splendour was by no means without effect on her Scottish nobles. The richest of them was mortified when he contrasted his poor and defective equipment with that of the French and English nobility, his peers. To a man they were rapacious in grasping any means of enriching themselves. The sight of Mary's possessions dazzled their rude imaginations and lightened for her the task of winning their allegiance. But experience of her large bounty increased their cupidity without exciting their gratitude.

Till her possessions arrived she had only smiles and thanks and gracious words to bestow, and of those she was no niggard. Brantôme's French ears might be tortured by the serenade of some honest men of the town—psalm-singing to the accompaniment of rebecks—but Mary not only declared that the music liked her well, but in her graciousness begged that it might be repeated on further evenings. The absence of all comfort and dignity in her surroundings could no more detract from Mary's queen-

liness than could any elaboration of ceremonial stiffen her vivacity and womanly sweetness. She received the envoy sent by the Lennoxes to congratulate her on her return, sitting in the midst of her luggage, the most royal creature that ever graced throne or packing-case. She might, in private, join in the laughter or the grumbling of her French attendants, but she was her father's daughter as well as niece to the Guises. She had come to gain the heart of her Scottish subjects, and in the excitement of those early days it is clear that her own heart went out to meet theirs. Of the Protestant nobles her conquest was rapid and complete. They who had but yesterday avowed themselves servants to Elisabeth now wrote to the English council resenting Elisabeth's denial of a free passport and hinting plainly at the recognition of Mary as next heir to the throne. It flattered the national vanity to have a queen who might match with any crown in Europe and bring two kingdoms as her dowry.

Had it not been for the religious question Mary and her people in these early days would have been heartily at one. Knox, in writing of Mary, constantly uses the word "dissimulate" and most unfairly, for there was entire clearness and decision in all her actions regarding religion. She had refused to ally herself with the Scottish Catholics, she had come unguarded by a single French soldier, for a whole week she had successfully conciliated her influential Protestant subjects, but on that first Sunday she unhesitatingly ordered the chapel of the palace to be prepared for the celebration of the mass.

There was no privacy at court in those days

JAMES STUART, EARL OF MURRAY

many of the noblemen had their lodging in the small crowded palace itself, others quite near in the aristocratic suburb of the Canongate. "The hearts of the godly were pierced," writes Knox, as if it were a quite unlooked for occurrence. The clash of arms was heard in the court and, distinct above the cry of angry men, the voice of the Master of Lindsay, in whom as we shall see, ferocity had stern alliance with fanaticism, proclaiming death to the idolater priest. The French household were terror-stricken but Mary never faltered.

"To have her mass in private, who should stay her?" so Lord James had asked the Council, with what should have been convincing commonsense. The cogency of his own remark was being uncomfortably forced home upon him. With the instincts of gentlemen and the kindliness of kinsmen Mary's three half-brothers stood by her. Lords Robert and John protected the priest back to his lodging, Lord James guarded the door during the service. It was a serious matter for this man whom "all the godly did most reverence"; it compromised his character with these severe, unreasoning judges. But he was not alone in his defection. Beyond the court precincts, in the crowded streets of Edinburgh, or in St Giles and especially in Knox's study the Lords of the Congregation might rage against the new scandal, but in the presence of the beautiful, cordial young Queen all protest faltered and men read their own weakness in the abashed, pleased countenances of their neighbour. "I think there be some enchantment whereby men are bewitched," said sober Campbell of Kinyeancleuch to a late-comer, Lord Ochiltree.

Edinburgh was a small town in those days. Pro-

bably not more than thirty thousand inhabitants were packed between the narrow walls. But each inhabitant of the steep crowded streets and wynds had hands quick to strike, a tongue ready to wag and a fiery heart to espouse any cause good or bad. On Sundays, Knox was accustomed to sway to his liking the better part of this energetic and dangerous community. On the Sunday that followed the Queen's mass, in a passionate address, he declared that "this one mass was more fearful to him than if ten thousand enemies had landed in the country." Behind Mary he saw the Guises, a Cardinal who might one day be Pope and a soldier who might any day by a caprice of court favour have irresponsible control of French armies. Behind the mass at Holyrood he saw the massacres of Amboise and the inextinguishable hatred of Huguenot and Catholic. Knox was right. It was as plainly incumbent on the Catholic Mary to destroy him and his sermon if she could, as it was the duty he felt to be laid upon himself to suppress her mass and, if need be, herself along with it. Such was the position of religious parties in the sixteenth century.

He might have allowed Mary the benefit of the doubt. There is little evidence that the Queen at this time felt strongly a mission to restore her country to the true fold. She was determined to be true herself to her religion, partly because loyalty was of the essence of her nature, partly because she knew that to turn Protestant would disqualify her for the leading part she meant to play in European diplomacy. At this moment she was set on the English succession, and for this end she needed the support of her Protestant subjects. It is possible, just possible, that a *modus vivendi*, such as Elisabeth had found, might

have been found for Mary also, but Knox was resolved that such a thing should not even be hoped for.

It is the inhuman element in Calvinism which teaches that the effort to save a large proportion of souls is useless if not impious. Knox, "as if he were of God's privy council"—the expression is that of the friendly Randolph—was determined that Mary "could never come to God nor ever have one single good thought of Him." He had hated her with theological hatred before she touched the Port of Leith, but there was a personal edge to his rancour after the first fortnight when he had seen his party broken up and his influence weakened by the magic of her presence. To this "idealism of hate" we owe the minute and vivid touches of all his references to Mary.

We know how largely Mary bulked in Knox's mind. It would be interesting to know the place he occupied in hers. It was certainly far smaller than he would have believed possible. At any time it argues singular originality of heart and brain when a woman of privileged position understands and approves opinions and sentiments opposite to those in which she has been brought up. There was nothing in Mary's experience or character that could dimly suggest to her that she was face to face with a new force, a force she was bound, at the peril of life and crown, to estimate duly. If she failed—failed tragically—to understand the power and quality of her enemy, she had at least the high spirit which was determined to lose no time in meeting him face to face. She relied on the controversial commonplaces she had learnt from her uncle; on the mere authority of the crown—never in her surroundings called in question; on her own quick wits;

and if she calculated also on the effect of personal fascination the experience of the last fortnight entirely justified her.

As Knox reports the dialogue, the bulk of the speaking was on his side. Mary showed indeed most unfeminine patience, never interrupting, and once enduring a pause which lasted fifteen minutes. Knox lectured her on his own credentials, on the limits of the obedience of subjects, on the idolatry of the mass. She kept her head and once and again revealed the weak points of his argument. When he bade her look upon it as the greatest glory that flesh can be heir to on earth to be in subjection to the Church of God, she asked pertinently which church? When he referred her to the authority of the Scripture, she asked "who shall be the judge and interpreter?" When he argued that it was the duty of subjects to disobey their princes when their consciences were otherwise, she brought the case home by saying, "Well, then, I perceive that my subjects shall obey you and not me. . . . So must I be subject to them and not they to me." It would have been difficult to sum up Master Knox's scheme of government more fairly.

It was indeed a strange impossible game of diplomacy, patience and self-repression that this high-spirited girl was called on to play with occasional self-interested partners, but no genuine allies, against a compact body of aggressive public opinion. In this game she was eventually to lose everything, crown, liberty and reputation. The wonder is that she kept it up so long and scored so many points against her opponents.

Even in the pageants that welcomed her return, insults were flung at her religion; there was an implied

menace in the symbolical burning of Korah and Dathan which ended the rejoicings in the High Street of Edinburgh. She was too prudent to make remonstrance, but the insults stung. Once during a similar pageant in the town of Dundee she turned suddenly faint and had to be lifted from her horse.

This prudence, however, argued no lack of spirit. A month after her arrival the provost and bailies of Edinburgh issued a proclamation coupling priests, friars and nuns with drunkards, whore-mongers and other scandalous livers and banishing them from the town. Instantly the royal authority swooped down upon the insolent magistrates, swept them into ward in the Tolbooth and issued a mandate for a new election.

Aggressive policy in matters of religion would have been futile and dangerous: to gain a sour, uncertain toleration for her own mass was the utmost she could achieve. Meanwhile the Pope, singularly ill-informed as to the true state of matters in the uttermost isles of the sea, was expecting for the Church some first-fruits of Mary's return. In the following July [1562] a papal ambassador by name Goudanus was sent secretly to Scotland to report on the state of religion and to invite the Queen and bishops to send a representative to the Council of Trent. The Scottish bishops of that day were not the stuff martyrs are made of. With one consent they refused even to receive Goudanus, save the Bishop of Dunblane, who made him assume the disguise of a banker's agent. The Queen risked even more than they in receiving an emissary of the Pope, but she was of quite other mettle.

For a month Goudanus had to skulk about Edinburgh in disguise, till one Sunday morning when

he was secretly conducted through outlying fields to Holyrood and smuggled up to the Queen's chamber. It was the time of sermon at St Giles and Lord James and other people of importance would be safely occupied for several quiet hours. The Queen was all Goudanus could have wished in cordiality and in assurances of faithful attachment to the Church, but she was too prudent to make any promises for the future.

The papal court never understood Mary's difficulties, and suspected her of lukewarmness while Knox was thundering at her anti-Protestant zeal. Irksome and anxious as was this constant friction about religion, ominous as we who have seen the end know it to be, it did not bulk disturbingly in Mary's eyes. She accepted all arrangements in Scotland, religious and political, as provisional. She looked forward to a diplomatic triumph in the Spanish marriage, to an alliance that would remove all restraints and difficulties, and put her opponents below her feet. Meantime she could tolerate and wait, absorbed in her plans and enjoying—as there is evidence to show she did enjoy—her position as an independent sovereign.

There is an incident, merely an incident, out of the main current of her story, which gives a natural and winning picture of her girlish eagerness to use her power for the service of her friends. Returning from the English court in January [1562] Lethington had brought sinister rumours of suspicion and disgrace fallen on the Guises. De Foix, an ambassador sent by Catherine, gave further details. An ugly story was current at the French court of an attempt to carry off Monsieur, the little Duke of Orleans, the next heir to the throne. The man accused of this wild enterprise

was the Duke of Nemours acting in the interests and at the instigation of the Guises.

Mary promptly and with angry tears denied the truth of such a tale. She would go bail for the honour of all her house. But she was filled with apprehension, and in this mood she sat down to write her heart out to her uncle. If any evil befell her friends she "would never have joy again having lost all, all that I held dear except only them." But the writer is not merely an affectionate woman pouring out sympathy, but a young queen offering all the resources of her power and influence.

It was at this moment that she and Elisabeth had begun their interchange of vows of devotion and mutual service. Mary acts on the assumption that all is sincerity between them. She entreats from Elisabeth for her uncles the favour of the services of the English ambassador at the French court. She is half apologetic, half triumphant as she relates to her uncle this stroke of diplomacy. But there is an unmistakable note of girlish exultation when she imagines the feelings of her uncle's enemies "if they see us, the Queen of England and me, getting on so well that she desires her ambassador to serve you as you appoint him."

All this generous scheming was unnecessary; at the very time of writing, the storm had blown past and the Guises were reinstated in their own place.

CHAPTER VI

HOLYROOD

January 1562—November 1562

THE six years of Mary's reign in Scotland are perhaps the swiftest and completest tragedy in history, but they began like a May game or the last act of a comedy, so full of play and pageant and love affairs and marriages were the first few months. All the court was young, the queen herself but nineteen. All her life she had been a Queen but never a ruler till now. Her first marriage had been a foregone conclusion: now she was waiting for the wooers who should come from over seas. Most of her ladies were young and unmarried. The four Maries seem to have had the character and warmth of heart of Scotswomen and the grace and vivacity of France.

There was only one woman at the English court; the sighs and amorous glances of young gallants were as steadily directed to the virgin Queen as were the portfolios of ministers or the despatches of ambassadors, but at the Scottish court Mary Beaton might entertain a supper-table by her wit or Mary Fleming queen it at a Twelfth Night party in her mistress's finest jewels and cloth of gold.

We can only skirt past the coarseness, corruption and cold cruelty of Catherine de Medici's court, but the minute and spiteful gossip of hostile critics such as Knox and—to a lesser degree—Randolph fail to prove any scandal in the gay doings at Holyrood. The

CONTEMPORARY PLAN OF EDINBURGH

affection Mary excited in her intimate women friends survived her disastrous love affairs, her shame and sorrow, her long imprisonment. At the court of Elisabeth, love affairs had to be carried on surreptitiously and marriages commonly ended in the Tower, but love and marriage were the element in which Mary lived. It was she who delighted to clothe the bride in cloth of silver with white taffety lining or other sumptuous fabric from her French stores; she who signed the contract, she who led the dance or figured in the masque.

In the January after her arrival her three half-brothers held their weddings with a state and luxury which, in the case of Lord James, was a scandal to the godly. But he could afford to stand a little aloof from Knox and his sermons; his star was in the ascendant; he had been made Earl of Mar, had married after "long love" the daughter of Earl Marischal. In all points his sister seemed to bend to his advice.

Gay and approachable as Mary might be in the intimate life of her court, claiming little privilege beyond what every other lady fondly accorded to her natural pre-eminence, she could sharply shut off the frivolities of her social life from the cares of state and diplomacy. She astonished Randolph by her clear recollection of all the craft and policy of the preceding years both in France and Scotland. Of all men Lethington had most dreaded her return; he had not been ashamed to hint to the English government the desirability of her capture; he had foreseen "great tragedies" if her return were allowed, but almost at once Lethington went over to her allegiance and became the most assiduous, as he certainly was the

ablest of her servants. She does not appear to have exercised her special, personal spell on his cool, observant nature, nor did she bribe him with gifts and honours as she did Lord James, but each soon recognised in the other a diplomatist with whom it would be easy and profitable to work Lethington's favourite scheme of a closer union between Scotland and England, and Mary's ambition to be recognised as Elisabeth's successor were plans that could be worked together. Together they concocted adroit and cogent letters to Elisabeth on the eternal subjects of the ratification of the treaty and the settlement of the succession. While on these two points neither queen retreated for a moment from the positions each had taken up yet, during the first year, a remarkable change passed over their relations to one another.

Ignoring any intention she may have had of capturing her cousin on the seas, Elisabeth gravely sent an envoy to congratulate her on her safe return. Then, as if by mutual consent, both ladies began a game of romantic devotion to each other. It is difficult to guess how far each imagined that she deceived the other; it is possible that at moments the deception extended even to themselves. Elisabeth had a curious pleasure in imagining herself in quite impossible situations as when she told the Spanish ambassador that what she would really like would be to be a nun. It is more difficult to believe that Mary ever persuaded herself that Elisabeth would enjoy playing the part of elder sister or mother to her triumphant youth; still the pretty game went on, graceful and symmetrical as a *contre-danse*, and about as serious. Mary almost persuaded the English ambassador, the observant and suspicious Randolph, of her sincerity. She would declare in jest that she

would have no husband but the Queen of England. She would carry Elisabeth's letters in her bosom and on occasions would wear no jewels except the diamond of her giving, while in stilted phrases that carry no conviction Elisabeth declared that it would be easier for her to forget her own heart than the heart of Mary, "ce cœur que je garde." Even a wise man like Lethington persuaded himself—so full of hopefulness and glamour was the time — that substantial advantages might pass across this rainbow bridge of feminine sentiment. He assured Randolph — and apparently quite gravely—that Mary "would never come to God unless the Queen's Majesty should draw her."

Negotiations were afoot for a meeting between the two queens in the summer of 1562. In desiring this interview Mary was entirely sincere; she had everything to gain. She knew how many there were in Elisabeth's kingdom "inclined to hear offers"; she knew precisely the view that devout Catholics were bound to take of Elisabeth's position; the last few months had taught her the political value of a marriageable young queen with a kingdom in her dowry, and feminine instinct was not reluctant that a discerning world should see herself and her cousin face to face and measure their beauties and their wits.

Two contradictory delusions haunted Mary up to the end of her life; either that Elisabeth with sudden generosity would yield her all she wanted, or that she could raise a party from Elisabeth's own subjects to enforce her rights by violence.

They were genuine tears of mortification which Mary shed when, at midsummer, Elisabeth decided that the meeting could not take place. It was probably

one of the many plans that Elisabeth had played with and never intended to carry out, but the fresh religious troubles which the ill-considered action of the Guises had caused to break out in France, furnished the English Queen with sufficient excuse for postponing her journey northwards.

If Mary had found in Lethington a partner in foreign diplomacy, she could join hands with Lord James in the administration of the country. Both were true Stuarts in their determination to enforce order in a country torn by factions and knowing no law but that of the strongest.

In the November after Mary's arrival Lord James was sent to the Border with free hand to deal with rievers and robbers. Whilst he was absent at Jedburgh—dispensing justice in a wholesale, probably quite necessary fashion—there occurred one night a mysterious alarm at Holyrood. A sudden rumour rose—no one knew how—that Arran was at hand with an armed force to carry off the Queen. Panic spread amongst the women, the men hastily organised themselves into a bodyguard and occupied outposts round the palace all night.

With daylight the terror vanished nor could any sufficient cause for it be found. But kidnapping princes had been the recognised policy of Scottish nobles during the nonage of more than one Stuart king and a queen young and marriageable would have been a valuable prey. The Hamiltons were not above suspicion. Old Chatelherault held aloof clinging to the one political fact he had ever mastered, his own position as heir to the throne, but his son Arran in his crazy brain was brooding over two wrongs; his own rejected suit and the insult offered to "the religion"

PALACE OF HOLYROOD HOUSE

by Mary's mass. This he gently characterised "as more odious in God's sight than the sin of murder." To a man in his morbid condition offences were not slow to offer themselves.

Few men have ever excited more ill-will among their peers than the Earl of Bothwell. In the late quarrel he had discomfited the Protestant lords, capturing supplies from England and making patent their dependence on Elisabeth. But that had been the fortune of war; the hostility of men like Lord James and Lethington was founded on personal qualities. He was too boastful, violent and dangerous for genuine friendship or political alliance; too little of a time-server to pretend to either. With Arran he had a personal feud, and, in consequence, both moved about with a dangerous and expensive following. "Black Ormistons," Hepburns of other ilks, reckless young scions of impoverished Border families, made up Bothwell's train, men ready for any deed of blood or rapine if he raised a finger.

Now it happened that the Earl and Lord Robert, the queen's half-brother, while hospitably making her uncle the Duc d'Elbœuf acquainted with the lawless pleasures of the town, had crossed the Earl of Arran on a similar quest. A street brawl, on an unusually large scale, had ensued, bringing down Mary's displeasure on the heads of all four.

Then quite suddenly and unaccountably Bothwell sought to be reconciled with Arran, using, oddly enough, Knox's good offices in the affair. He passed at once into suspicious intimacy with his former enemy. Four days later, Arran, excited and distressed, sought out Knox and poured out wild, incoherent accusations against Bothwell. He had

proposed, according to Arran, that they two should murder Lord James and Lethington, kidnap the Queen and have all the kingdom in their power. It may have been—it probably was—a crazy delusion on the part of Arran. But Bothwell was at any time capable of making a reckless throw for fortune, and at that time he had nothing to lose either in wealth or credit. Here at any rate was an opportunity for the crown to reap substantial results and for Lord James to clear away more than one rival. Mary might soften to poor old Chatelherault's protestations of innocence but Dumbarton was nevertheless taken out of his charge. Arran was shut up in the prison from which he never emerged, and Bothwell was put in ward in Edinburgh Castle. Men thought that Mary gave that last order reluctantly, and that she was not ill-pleased when a few months later he broke his prison. He was on his way to join her uncles in France when he was wrecked on the English coast. Two years he was kept a prisoner in England, then, on Mary's entreaty, was set free and retired to France. For three long years he disappears out of the story.

Bothwell removed from the Border, the power of the Hamiltons weakened in the west, there remained the north where Huntly with his wealth, his Highland hordes and his self-willed unscrupulous sons, was a standing menace to law and order. Catholic though he was he inspired the Queen with no confidence, and Lord James had a personal animus against him. He held in irregular possession that Earldom of Murray on which Lord James' heart was set, and fortune in this case forwarded the godly.

John Gordon, Huntly's son, had been sent to prison for the customary crime of stabbing his enemy in the

street. He had the effrontery to break his ward, defy the Queen's authority and flee to his father. Huntly had the imprudence to uphold his son's action. Mary happened to be on her northward progress at the time. Bitterly displeased, she refused to be the guest of Huntly at Strathbogie. Incredulous that she would carry matters to an extremity with the most powerful Catholic in her kingdom, Huntly remained sullenly recalcitrant till Lord James' action, prompt and authoritative, drove him into open rebellion. The overthrow of this great house was complete, Huntly himself died of apoplexy in the moment of defeat, his eldest son was imprisoned during the queen's pleasure, John Gordon, the chief offender, was beheaded in Aberdeen. The queen was present at the execution, some thought unwillingly and constrained by her half-brother. The sumptuous plenishings of Strathbogie were forfeited and carried south to Holyrood.

Mary's high spirit had been roused by opposition, she had entered with zest into the dangers and excitement of the campaign, envying the men who, with casque and buckler, came in from their night-watch in the field; but the complete triumph of Murray—for the coveted earldom had, without loss of time, been openly conferred upon him—was not a main object of Mary's policy.

It is curious that Mary's history was to be more intimately involved with the ruined House of Huntly than with any other family in Scotland. On the Sunday following the murder of Riccio it was old Lady Huntly who visited the deserted young queen with schemes for her escape. At Craigmillar, at Kirk o' Field, at Almond Bridge, Huntly was ever at

Bothwell's right hand. Tapestry hangings from Strathbogie covered the nakedness of the wretched chamber where Mary took her last good-night of Darnley her husband. The only human being whom Mary ever cruelly and selfishly injured was Lady Jean Gordon, the young and virtuous wife of Bothwell.

CHAPTER VII

MARY AND ELISABETH

October 1562—September 1564

FORTUNATELY for posterity a gift for gossip was, in the sixteenth century, an essential part of a diplomatist's equipment. We have seen the skill with which Throckmorton could report conversation; Philip of Spain was kept informed by his ambassador, the Bishop of Aquila, of the phases of Elisabeth's flirtation with Lord Robert Dudley with a minuteness that would satisfy a novel reader.

When two queens rule neighbouring, mutually suspicious countries; when each, by curious fate, centres in herself the hopes of two opposing religious parties; when both are young, handsome and of marriageable age, their personal inclinations and ambitions, their love affairs, their offers of marriage become of vital moment in the history of politics and diplomacy. It was necessary for Elisabeth and Mary that each should have at the court of the other an envoy, not only devoted to the interests of his mistress, but with eyes quick to mark jealousies, moods, alliances; ears ready to pick up court scandals, quarrels, rumours and even sentiments, and a lively pen skilled to present the court of either queen agreeably to her rival.

Few men have had a finer gift for gossip than Sir James Melville, on one occasion Mary's envoy at the court of Elisabeth. Driven by some impish fate,

working in the interests of posterity, Elisabeth delivered herself into the hands of this lively and adroit courtier. There is no more humorous and telling piece of portraiture in history than his representation of the virgin queen.

This is not the great queen who could say with truth "I have always behaved myself so that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal heart and good-will of my subjects"; not the high-hearted Englishwoman who defied Spain at the head of her soldiers, declaring that "in her woman's body she had the heart of a king and a King of England too, and thought foul shame that Spain or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of her realm." It is the very feminine Elisabeth, vain, jealous, sentimental, undignified, treacherous, the Elisabeth that appears habitually in the story of Mary.

She evidently intended to make an impression on Melville, wore every day a new gown, and consulted him as to which became her best; she laid an elaborate plot that he might surprise her in solitude playing on the virginals; he had to delay his return for two days that he might not lose the chance of seeing her dancing "high and disposedly." She spoke half a dozen languages that he might see her accomplishments. She was shamelessly eager to extract from him whether she were not as fair, as tall, as golden-haired as her younger cousin. She talked sentimentally to him about Lord Robert Dudley as the man she loved "as a brother," produced his portrait from her cabinet but could hardly be persuaded to show it to Melville. With incurable, romping levity she must needs tickle Lord Robert's neck during the serious

MARY BEATON

ceremony which invested him with the earldom of Leicester and this in the presence of all the foreign ambassadors. Rarely has any woman had so small a sense of natural propriety.

Sir James' narrative excites suspicion by its very picturesqueness. Far more convincing are the life-like conversations, descriptions, and anecdotes that crop up incidentally in the despatches of Thomas Randolph, Elisabeth's ambassador at the court of Mary. Honestly devoted to his own mistress and her interests, and the friend of Lethington and Murray, he might be flattered by Mary's graciousness into cordiality but seldom out of his suspicion of her. At times he irritated her; she was always on her guard with him; but she admitted him to her intimacy, and probably watched with amusement his attentions to his "dear mistress, worthy Beaton." To him we owe many winning pictures of the frank simplicity of Mary's court life.

Her family affections, as we have seen, were singularly warm, and the death of her uncle the Duke of Guise in February 1563 had been a bitter grief to her. She was at St Andrews when Randolph arrived bringing her a letter of condolence from Elisabeth. He found her hawking in the neighbourhood and presented his letter. Her tears flowed so abundantly over the kind words, that when she rejoined her party at the dining-place her sorrowful face cost him many angry looks from her ladies till Mary explained how much consolation her good cousin's letter had given her. On this same occasion Mary Beaton "the hardiest and wisest" of her Maries, had to break to her the death of another uncle, dead of his wounds, and her sorrow broke out afresh. Yet Randolph goes

on to say that that evening he and Lethington and Murray succeeded in wringing some laughter from her.

There is another charming picture of her two years later, again on a visit to St Andrews. She lodged with a small train in a merchant's house in South Street, saw few people, and "lived merrily like a Bourgeois wife with her little troop," and there received the English ambassador.

When Randolph wanted to introduce the eternal subject of her marriage she reproached him for interrupting the pastime with his great and grave matters. "I pray you, Sir, if you be weary here, return to Edinburgh and keep your gravity and great ambassage until the queen come thither. . . . You see here neither cloth of state nor such appearance that you may think there is a queen here; nor I would not that you should think that I am she at St Andrews that I was in Edinburgh." He adds that it pleased Mary to be very merry and to call him by many nicknames, the sober, serious, self-conscious man of affairs!

Randolph's letters and Knox's narrative alike fail to show any weakness in Mary. She never lacked dignity nor presence of mind. Anger she showed, and sorrow, but never vanity nor indecision nor any of the more ignoble faults. Yet it was the woman of the warmer heart, the more generous hand, the finer nature who was to meet with treachery and ingratitude on all hands, while neither her caprice nor her shameless disloyalty were to deprive Elisabeth of the most devoted and efficient services ever rendered to a crown. In Elisabeth's service men suffered bankruptcy, so great was her parsimony; they took their credit in their hands knowing that she would not scruple to disown their actions if it suited her convenience; they bore

QUEEN ELIZABETH

with her temper, her violent language, her foolishness even when these jeopardised their wisest schemes.

The fact is that the two countries were at quite different stages of development. England was waking up to a consciousness of her national life, in every direction she was feeling after her destiny. To the Englishmen of that day, to soldiers, adventurers, poets as well as to statesmen, some symbol was necessary of the national greatness for which they were labouring. Such a symbol they found and worshipped in their maiden queen. And in truth there were qualities in Elisabeth to justify this worship. She had, as it were, an instinct divining the thought of her people and prescient of their destiny, she used the large full utterance characteristic of the time, she shared its audacity, its love of adventure, she *was* the heart of England.

In Scotland, too, under thwarting factions and greedy barbarisms, the national life and conscience were struggling into being. For a century and a half to come, this life was to develop solely along the line of a narrow, intense, absorbing religious consciousness. Alone among nations Scotland had to adjust her relations to the Almighty before she took her place among civilising powers. It was the doom of the later Stuart kings to be one and all in mortal hostility to the spiritual instincts of their people. The nobler among them, those who held convictions of their own, Mary, Charles I., James II. perished in the conflict, James VI. and Charles II. escaped through sheer frivolity. This cleavage began fatally and inevitably with Mary and was due as much to her finer qualities as to her faults.

Randolph tells us incidentally that Mary disliked Edinburgh. It was not the steep, red-roofed romantic

little town that excited her dislike, but the sense she had of a spirit in its inhabitants, inquisitive, censorious and directly hostile to herself. Month by month the strain between her and her people grew more tense. In the year 1562-63 civil war was raging in France, a war for which her uncles were mainly responsible. Elisabeth openly supported the Huguenots; Mary could not afford to quarrel with Elisabeth but her sympathies were naturally with her kinsfolk. As naturally the sympathies of her subjects were on the other side. The populace of Edinburgh, always demonstrative, could barely be restrained from posting placards wounding to Mary's feelings on the doors of her palace.

News filtered in at long intervals. She was mainly dependent on the English ambassador for information, and it was hard for her and her ladies to command their countenances when Glencairn or Randolph hastened to report some Protestant success. If she, on her side, showed signs of satisfaction when the fortune of war leaned the other way, immediately the godly were vociferous, accusing her of rejoicing in the sufferings of God's people. A ball at Holyrood which took place about the time that news arrived of the fall of Rouen was the subject of an angry sermon from Knox. Indeed the "dancing and flinging" of Mary and her "French fillocks" (fillettes) occupied a quite undue amount of the reformer's attention. There was surely a forlorn and commendable courage in the fact of these ladies still professing, in untoward circumstances, "joyeuseté" as their plan of life. To pass one's days dissimulating all spontaneous feeling, and affecting toleration of all that goes against the grain is so heavy a part that one wonders how Mary could keep it up so long. Life at Holyrood,

after the first excitement was past, must have been dull enough. The very language of her nobles was unfamiliar and uncouth to her ears. What had she in common with Ochiltree and Glencairn, stiff, honest Puritans? What with the fierce Lindsay, the greedy truculent Morton and the sinister Ruthven? Small wonder if she and her ladies welcomed eagerly anyone bringing with him the old gay habits and artistic charm of the French court.

In the winter of 1563 Chastelard was back in Scotland drawn by the irresistible fascination which was to be his doom. A passion for some royal lady was part of the equipment of a court poet, and he made no secret of his devotion, pouring out sighs and sonnets at the feet of the Queen of Scots. Such offerings were frankly welcome to Mary. Daily readings in Livy with a thin-skinned pedant like George Buchanan were dry nourishment for a romantic young woman. The polished Latin verses he wrote for her masques might be the admiration of Europe, but they lacked the sweet intimate flattery of Ronsard's or du Bellay's courtly verse. Chastelard was a poet of the same school as these. He was an adept in that quick-witted, half-intellectual, half-frivolous social intercourse to which Mary had been accustomed. He knew the catchwords of her circle, he could recall old laughter and reawaken forgotten sentiment. And at all times Mary was hungry for pleasantness and easy flattery. She rubbed up her accomplishment of verse-making to return him sonnet for sonnet. They were skilful partners in those elaborate Renaissance dances which, in graceful pantomime, suggest dramas of passion or of sentiment.

From the times of James III. and earlier, the

Scottish nobility had hated foreigners and despised artists. They resented it bitterly when they found this "abject varlet" (so they chose to call Chastelard, sister's son to the Chevalier Bayard) hanging about Mary at all hours, talking talk to her which was meaningless to them.

Once and again Mary was to make the mistake of allowing familiarity where she found sympathy. Chastelard was but a feather-brained youth, and passion and vanity turned his head. On the evening of February 12th [1563] Mary was sitting up late discussing important matters with Lethington and Murray. Her ladies waiting in her bed-chamber had fallen asleep, and Chastelard had the audacity to step in and hide below her bed. Fortunately the grooms of the chamber discovered and drove him out before Mary's approach. When informed of his effrontery she angrily dismissed him, and thought the whole painful business at an end.

Nothing could stop Chastelard's infatuation. Two nights later at Burntisland he burst into Mary's bedroom, fortunately before she had dismissed her ladies. The cries of dismay brought instant help. Murray was the first on the spot. Mary adjured him to avenge her on the man who had insulted her. Murray did rightly in preserving Chastelard for the slower vengeance of the law, but one could have forgiven some degree of heat and even of violence in an elder brother called in to defend a sister's honour!

The relations of Mary and her half-brother were all the more uneasy because of their necessary closeness. Three objects Murray had at heart; to keep a steady eye on his own interests, to keep the Queen of England his friend, and to uphold the Protestant

religion. At any moment one or all of these was bound to run counter to his allegiance to Mary. With curious subtlety he reconciled these three principles with cordial approval of the Spanish marriage. He probably hoped that such a marriage would—after the birth of an heir to the throne—remove Mary from Scotland and leave the regency in his hands. Lethington was even more ductile. "Whatsoever she most liketh, that he most alloweth," Randolph said of him at a later date. In 1563 with all the force of her will and brain, all the glow of her imagination, Mary was working at her scheme for the Spanish marriage, and Lethington was devoting all "his wisdom to conceive and his wit to convey" to furthering her plans. On the very night of Chastelard's first attempt he had received final instructions. He was accredited to the courts of England and France, but had also secret messages for Aquila the Spanish ambassador in London.

It was not without some justification that Buchanan with heavy satire described Lethington as a chameleon. It would be difficult to recognise the brain of the Protestant rebellion in Scotland, the constant advocate of union with England in the complacent envoy sitting in confidential midnight tête-a-tête with the Spanish ambassador, easily talking away all objections to the match. The Scottish nobles, he declared, would like the alliance; the religious difficulty could be adjusted. Then to quicken the Spaniard's zeal a hint was thrown out of an alternative scheme of marrying the Scottish queen to her brother-in-law the young King of France—a plan that would indeed have been news to Catherine de Medici.

The advantages to Spain were obvious. Aquila

caught fire at once, so did Granvella when the plan was communicated, even the sluggish imagination of Philip seemed kindled for a moment. But true to his motto, "io y el tempo," he delayed action and allowed difficulties to accumulate and become insuperable. Objections arose on all sides. The Cardinal of Lorraine had been so accustomed to manage Mary's affairs, that without consulting her he had offered her hand to the Emperor for his second son. Archduke Charles, a sensible and educated gentleman, was at a discount as a suitor. Elisabeth objected to him that his head was too large. Mary that his wealth and power were insufficient. Still the negotiation complicated matters with Spain. Philip was unwilling to enter into competition with his uncle, the Emperor.

The Spanish marriage had always been a nightmare to Catherine. Such a policy would be ruinous to France, such elevation of her daughter-in-law the bitterest humiliation to herself. French opposition was another obstacle to the irresolute Philip. The English government also got word of the negotiations, and a letter to the Queen of Scots made it perfectly clear that Elisabeth would resent as a hostile act either the Spanish or Austrian marriage, or indeed any alliance that would increase Mary's power and position. This practically limited her choice to one of Elisabeth's subjects or one of her own. Even Murray was inclined to resent such interference.

Meantime the most formidable difficulty lay at home among Mary's own subjects. The Spanish negotiations were to be kept an absolute secret, but Knox had correspondents everywhere and few events at the courts of France and England failed to reach

DON CARLOS

his ears. In May when the negotiations between Lethington and Aquila were most promising and seemed most secret, Knox suddenly fulminated from St Giles. "Dukes and the brethren of emperors and kings were" he knew "suitors to the queen." With prophetic sternness he warned the nobility that in the day when they consented "that an infidel—and all papists are infidels—shall be head to your sovereign ye do so far as in ye lieth to banish Jesus Christ from the realm." We have only to remember the bitter struggle of the Netherlands against Spanish tyranny to recognise the entire reasonableness of Knox's fears. In this he was the guardian of the future liberties alike of England and Scotland. But from Mary's point of view his sermon was a monstrous, unwarrantable interference. She sent for him and in a vehement fume heaped reproaches on him.

"What have ye to do with my marriage? or what are ye within this Commonwealth?"

"A subject born within the same and, as God hath made me, a profitable member."

We hear the echoes of this notable phrase in Solemn Leagues and Covenant, in Declaration of Rights, in Revolution Settlements, but the sound was too mighty to be caught by contemporary ears. Mary's burst of angry tears is hardly a comma in the march of a great period.

Finally it was neither Knox, nor Catherine nor Elisabeth who thwarted Mary's dearest ambition. In these high political alliances one forgets that personal qualities went for anything. The inhuman dislike Philip had to his own son probably quickened his perception that Don Carlos' ill-developed body, dulled wits and brutalised instincts unfitted him for

the part of Mary's husband and partner of her greatness. True to his nature Philip took months to arrive at this conclusion and the negotiations wore on and gradually dwindled from lack of response from the side of Spain. It was a cruelly trying time for Mary. She had borne with the constraint and disquiet of her lot because she judged them to be temporary, but from the autumn of 1563 all avenues of escape seemed to be closing upon her. Her body, vigorous enough but highly strung, always responded to the mood of her soul. She was ill and depressed, weeping often without apparent cause. Her moods varied. At times she still asserted that she might marry where she pleased, at others would complain that she was sought by nobody. Again, more in Elisabeth's vein, would praise the widow's life as best.

Three feminine powers, like three fates, were working at Mary's destiny. Catherine's activity was limited to thwarting where she could. Lady Lennox, Mary's aunt, had been Elisabeth's prisoner in the tower for the two previous years, but in the summer of 1563, by a sudden freak of Elisabeth's policy, the whole family were released and invited to court. Here they were much made of, especially the boy Darnley who was on all occasion recognised as first prince of the blood. At this period, too, Elizabeth first petitioned Mary for the return of the Lennoxes to Scotland.

The real arbiter of Mary's fate was however Elisabeth. She had posed as mother or elder sister to her cousin. On her lay the onus of proposing some marriage she would approve since she had thwarted those already mooted. She could not have made a more impossible and insulting proposal than the one she had hinted at for months and openly pro-

pounded in February 1564. Lord Robert Dudley was the second son of the Earl of Northumberland who had died attainted of treason. All his wealth and position he owed to that infatuation of Elisabeth which had been the scandal of courts and the gossip of ambassadors. The suspicion that hung round the death of his wife, Amy Robsart, had never been cleared away, he had played with all religious parties and Cecil, for one, was under no delusion as to the worthlessness of his character. The prudent Secretary was eager to remove from the side of his own mistress a man who was a constant temptation to her folly. It is more difficult to follow Elisabeth's motives. She believed the man whom she offered to her cousin to be passionately in love with herself. Perhaps with the perverted sentimentality of a woman devoid of natural, elementary feeling, she imagined that this would continue when he was Mary's husband, and that "Dudley, so trusty and loving" would always put her interests before those of his wife!

Mary read her cousin's motives with feminine subtlety. A man accepted by one queen might be regarded as an eligible suitor for another, Elisabeth might be only using her cousin to enhance her Dudley's value. The negotiations, unreal as they were, became more serious and absurd. Elisabeth went the length of suggesting that they three should form one household "at her charges." The simplest explanation is that she wished to put on her cousin the onus of refusing the suitor offered. This would justify Elisabeth in refusing approbation of any other. But Mary never failed to put Elisabeth in the wrong. She would neither refuse nor accept till Elisabeth declared definitely what she proposed

to do for her. Vague promises had no meaning. If she abased herself to such a match and Elisabeth herself married and had children or in anyway disallowed her claim, where would Mary find herself, her friends alienated, her dignity lowered and nothing gained?

Along with this singular negotiation other strands were being worked into Mary's destiny. In the summer of 1563 we have seen Elisabeth, in a sudden twist of policy, petitioning Mary for the recall of the Lennoxes. But a year later, when Mary had lent a willing ear to the request, Elisabeth suddenly backed out of the responsibility, She had the effrontery to suggest that Mary should retract her permission to Lennox to return, and should do this as if on her own initiative.

Elisabeth had been straining Mary's patience for many preceding months. It must have been a relief to the Scottish queen to explode in righteous anger at the intolerable proposal. Dissimulate and deceive as she might, Mary's pride at all times forbade her to go back on her plighted word and she had little motive to do so to please her cousin. When Lennox arrived in September [1564] he had a gracious reception. He was bidden to alight at Holyrood and was merely allowed time to remove his boots before he was summoned into the royal presence. His restoration to titles and lands was solemnly proclaimed at the cross of Edinburgh. With mischievous and exulting irony the proclamation declared emphatically that the restoration was for the sake and at the recommendation of the Queen's good cousin the Queen of England.

Twenty years of exile and waiting on chance had

not changed Lennox. He was vain, weak, treacherous and at once servile and overbearing. During the first months of his return he was prodigal of gifts and civilities. It was noticeable that in a shower of gifts none was bestowed on the Earl of Murray.

Lennox's arrival was the signal for old feuds to revive, making curious cross-divisions in religious and political parties. Outwardly conciliation was the order of the day.

Reconciling irreconcilable enemies was one of Mary's constant occupations, but neither she, nor the principals engaged, nor any one else, had any confidence in the professed amity between Lennox and the Hamiltons. The Earl of Morton held aloof till he was certain that no claim would be made on the forfeited land of Angus which he was enjoying. The whole country dreaded the possible return of Lady Lennox as "a plague no less formidable than the return of the French soldiery."

There was a second thread in the web that was so soon to entangle Mary in its meshes. Ever since Bothwell had been detained in England in 1562, petitions had been sent from Scotland for his release. It is surprising to find Lethington's good offices employed on behalf of a man whom he disliked. "Lethington wishes to be too great with all men"; so Randolph explained his character. But in this case subtler influences were at work. The two most active workers for Bothwell were the Queen and Mary Fleming; they alone felt any satisfaction when he obtained his freedom in 1564.

He went to France and joined the king's guard, a penniless, swaggering adventurer, free in his talk, eager to pick up the coarse, loose gossip of the guardroom.

Yet another thread. Gossip about the Leicester marriage had spread at the French court. Mary believed that Raulet, her French secretary, had been indiscreet and he was dismissed. For three years Mary had had among her "chamber varlets" an Italian called Riccio, "a merry fellow and a good musician." At the end of 1564, he took Raulet's place as French secretary, and very quickly his influence with Mary became unbounded.

CHAPTER VIII

DARNLEY

February 1565—July 1565

IT is curious that in all the chronicles we have of Mary's reign we never light on a sunshiny morning till we reach the fatal day at Carberry. Then, as now, the sun rode high over Arthur's Seat at the summer solstice and meadows were green and daisied round the Nor Loch. But in the correspondence of the time no one noticed such pleasant normal things, but constantly we find references to snowstorms and fogs, harvests mildewed in the fields, and times of dearth and sickness.

The winter of 1565 was bitterly cold, so cold that no tapestry hangings, nor Turkey carpets nor sea-coal fires could make Holyrood comfortable. In the worst of the storm Mary simply remained in bed as a means of keeping warm. Ways were blocked, and the court, shut up more and more within the small, crowded palace, was specially active in banqueting, dancing, intriguing, gossiping and love-making.

The spell which had kept the four Maries unmarried was broken. Mary Livingstone, called "the Lusty," was to show her mistress the way to the altar. Young Semple of Belrees was said to have danced himself into his lady's favour. Mary Fleming could boast a more distinguished suitor. Lethington, for all his forty years and subtle mocking spirit, surprised and amused his old friends by the ardour of his love-

making. "We that are lovers are always in merry pin," he wrote to Cecil. If Randolph sighed in moderation for the wise and spirited Beaton, yet his affection was constant; fourteen years later he was to write to the Regents of Scotland begging their favour for "my dear friend Lady Boyne." Mary Seton alone seems to have lacked a lover. Years afterwards in the colourless days at Sheffield she was to have a gentle, elderly romance of her own. But it closed sadly, and she alone of all the five ended her life in religion.

Meantime to the Mary of Maries, a suitor was at last coming from across the hills. All through the winter of 1564-65 diplomacy was carrying on the lifeless old game. All hopes of the Spanish marriage was dying down. There had never been any reality in the Leicester proposal, but for Mary to refuse it categorically would have been to lose a point to Elisabeth. Alarmed at the possibility of being taken at her word and either losing her minion or humbling herself to Mary by withdrawing the proposal, Elisabeth sought about for some way out of what she described as a "labyrinth." A new suitor must be found to engage Mary's attention; later, he might be negatived in the usual way. Cecil, Leicester and Elisabeth agreed that Darnley might be allowed to join his father in Scotland. For this Lennox had been preparing by flatteries and banquetings, for this his far cleverer wife had been intriguing with letters and gifts.

Rarely has any lad of nineteen gone out to meet his fortune with fairer hopes and with smaller deservings. From his childhood the wrongs of the forfeited lands of Angus and Lennox had been dinned into one ear and into the other his closeness to the

HENRY, LORD DARNLEY

thrones of England and of Scotland. Marriage with his beautiful cousin the Queen of Scots was the goal for which his mother had planned his education. He was bred a Catholic that he might become the centre of Catholic disaffection in England, but his convictions were not suffered to take inconvenient hold upon him. He had the accomplishments of the gilded youth of all times, could ride, hawk, hunt, tread a measure, touch a lute. For the rest, he swaggered and ruffled it, bullied where he might with impunity, and could cringe and apologise painfully when he was frightened. Just before his death, in the emotional weakness of recovery from sickness, he was to plead with Mary "I am yet but young," and at the bar of history—singularly relentless always to Darnley—the smooth boyish face with the wide, vacant eyes still pleads in extenuation of sins and follies, "I am but young."

Early in February 1565 he crossed the Border which he was never to recross. Mary was in Fife on one of her numerous progresses. At Edinburgh, Darnley was the guest of Lord Robert, the wild, genial young blood, ready at all times to share the follies of any man, of d'Elboeuf or Bothwell or Darnley. Either from poverty or boyish lack of prevision Darnley came unprovided with horses and borrowed a pair from Randolph to speed him to Fife. At Wemyss Castle on the north shore of the Firth of Forth the two cousins met on February 17th.

For four years Mary had been a widow, for four years every unmarried man in Europe of suitable rank had been spoken of as her husband, but during all that time she had seen no man—except poor mad Arran—who might venture to address his suit to her or speak words of love that were neither conventionality

nor effrontery. She was wearied, disappointed and exasperated with all the marriage negotiations; she was young, beautiful, warm-hearted, and passionate.

Of vanity and the desire for conquest there is little trace in Mary; she had the stronger, more primitive, more fatal desire for self-surrender. If she were a queen she would love like a queen, laying her crown and authority at the feet of him on whom she would bestow her heart.

She had been lonely all these years. Of those who had guided her youth, Duke Francis was dead and the last months had convinced her of the purely self-regarding policy of the Cardinal. He was fighting for place and influence and used her marriage simply as a counter in his own game. "Truly I am beholden to my uncle," she had said in bitter disillusionment; "so that it be well with him, he careth not what becometh of me." There was no man of all about her court whose advice she would take, indeed there was not one whose advice would be disinterested. Her ladies, fond and faithful, were accustomed to give sympathy not counsel. She had recklessly accustomed herself to confidence and intimacy with a mere servant like Riccio, and, by understanding her wishes and hastening to meet them, the Italian had acquired extraordinary influence over her. As soon as he saw her thoughts inclining towards Darnley he cultivated his intimacy and became his ardent advocate.

Darnley spent but one night at Wemyss, but he had made a favourable impression: he was "the lustiest and best proportioned long man she had seen," she said. He returned with her to Edinburgh and enjoyed all the pleasures the capital

could offer. Murray was intent on being hospitable and Darnley on being gracious. To please his host Darnley attended Knox's sermon in the morning, to please his guest Murray invited him to dance a galliard with Mary in the evening. Murray, who could be splendid on occasion, gave a banquet at Holyrood and the company laughed when Mary sent a merry message complaining that she had not been included among the guests.

With joyous excitement Mary felt her heart following the path to which policy was pointing. On March 16th Elisabeth nettled and insulted her by a letter which made it clear that marriage would do nothing towards settling the succession of the English crown. In her anger Mary calculated that marriage with Darnley would double her legal right to that succession and would show Elisabeth how lightly she, Mary, regarded the minion of the English Queen. Nor need she forego her favourite triumph of putting Elisabeth in the wrong. The English Queen had limited her choice to a Scotch or English nobleman and Darnley was both. So love-making went on apace with lute playing and games of bowls, with masking and merry-making, with laughter and sweet low whispering.

Mary never liked Edinburgh, nor Holyrood lying in its low damp meadows. Early in April the court was at Stirling. Then, as if to prove how much he was a child, Darnley must needs fall ill of the measles. A feverish, irritable boy suffering from a nursery complaint seems hardly a consort for a heroine of romance, but Mary's affections were already deeply engaged. Pity, anxiety, the womanly passion for nursing, all hurried her along the path she was so willing to tread. Early and late "he hath tendance of the greatest and

fairest," writes Randolph. She was so reckless in the long, late hours she spent in his room that tongues began to wag. The gossip reached Lady Lennox—once more a prisoner in the Tower—and filled her with undisguised exultation; it also shocked the maidenly reserve of Elisabeth, and she begged Lethington to contradict the report.

At this time Mary had freed herself from the restraining influence of Murray and of Lethington. The latter was sent to England in April, ostensibly with a message to the English court, but it was comparatively indifferent to Mary whether Elisabeth approved her marriage, or disapproved it as she was morally certain to do. If she could persuade the King of Spain to sanction her marriage with Darnley and support their double claim to the English succession, she would have little reason to regret the Spanish marriage and might triumphantly follow the leading of her own heart. The real object of Lethington's embassy to London was discussed in secret and satisfactory interviews with the Spanish ambassador.

In April Mary had quarrelled with Murray who had suddenly taken the line of opposing her marriage with Darnley. In dudgeon he had retired to St Andrews. She was heartily tired of the long dissimulation of her relations to her half-brother.

There is no doubt that Mary was "fey" in these spring days at Stirling. She was carried away by excitement, defiantly challenging criticism, eager for new forms of amusement. In his romantic youth her father had wandered freely among his subjects in various disguises. The freak seized Mary to repeat these mystifications. One day she and her ladies dressed up—a most transparent disguise—as burgher

wives and teased and cajoled the passers-by to give them money for a banquet. She was not under happy influences at this time. Like other lonely great ones she was too prone to be influenced by servants. Riccio, flexible and of ready resource, was her chief counsellor. He managed her foreign affairs, quickened and extended her correspondence with Philip and the Pope. In her impatience of public opinion she was careless of conciliating her Protestant subjects. Easter was celebrated this spring with defiant publicity and elaboration. In domestic affairs Riccio shaped his counsel to his mistress' desires, and was the serviceable friend of Darnley and the constant advocate for the marriage. So were all the men who in these reckless days were Mary's intimates. Lennox, eager and subservient, was ready to countenance any rash act that would advance his son ; Lord Robert was cheerfully working for a state of things that promised less restraint and more enjoyment. Lord Ruthven, a kinsman of Lady Lennox, had acquired sudden influence ; men whispered of rings and bracelets, and spells cast by his unholy skill. And meantime the Maries, these wise, prudent ladies were clean out of favour and mostly stayed at home when their mistress rode abroad, each probably consoling herself with her own particular love affair.

Most of the accounts that we have of Mary at this time come from Randolph, and Randolph was at a complete discount and kept at a distance. He and Murray would meet and discuss Mary's looks and behaviour, and, like the virtuous men they were, would hope the best and insinuate the worst; and then the English ambassador with many an "I could an I

would" and "saving your presence" would convey the worst impression he could to his correspondent Cecil.

As the weeks passed on he reported varying moods on Mary's part. Her very beauty he declared was altered from what it was; also, he was convinced, she had "fallen into contempt with all men"; her passions struck this fastidious observer "as more fervent than is comely for even meaner persons." Also he had to report rather uneasily the general belief in Scotland that Darnley had been sent by Elisabeth that Mary might fall into the trap and mate herself meanly. However, neither facts nor the detection of facts ever disconcerted Elisabeth. Early in May Mary's old friend Throckmorton was sent down with a peremptory message to Mary to stay the marriage, and to Lennox and his son to return to England.

He travelled to Scotland with Lethington, and probably was taken in by the Secretary's indignant condemnation of the rashness of his mistress the Queen of Scots. But while Throckmorton was detained at Edinburgh by royal prohibition, Lethington had joined the Queen at Stirling and had relieved her mind by the assurance that de Silva—the able and urbane successor of the Bishop of Aquila as Spanish ambassador—had smiled upon her project and was communicating the same to the King of Spain. Even without this assurance, Mary was prepared to defy Elisabeth, Murray, the Hamiltons, Argyle, and the Protestant ministers and to marry the man of her heart in spite of them. On the 15th of May in the presence of her chief nobility she created Darnley Earl of Ross with sundry other titles. During the ceremony the English ambassador rode up to the castle, but Mary's spirit was up and she kept her

doors closed upon him till leisure served to grant him an interview.

There was always a good understanding between Mary and this honest ambassador of Elisabeth's, and she showed him plainly that for no consideration would she give up marriage with Darnley. All he gained was the promise that the marriage should be delayed for three months. Mary probably calculated the time to allow of an answer from Philip and the arrival of the papal dispensation — always necessary in the marriage of near kinsfolk.

It was clear to Throckmorton's observing eye that parties were drawing into hostile camps much as they had done in the Queen's mother's time in 1559. Murray, Chatelherault and Argyll were forming a bond for mutual defence. A message was secretly conveyed to them, not through the English ambassador but through Randolph, that, in the worst extremity they might look for help in the accustomed quarter. This confirmed Murray in his recalcitrancy. He refused to attend a Parliament summoned at Perth, because he declared that he had evidence that Darnley and his father were plotting to murder him. To show their abhorrence of such devices he and Argyll made a counterplot to fall upon Mary, Darnley and Lennox, on their way from Perth to Edinburgh. Mary got wind of this plot. The day had been fixed for her return; she made no panic-stricken change of plans but ordered her horses at daybreak, and she and her train had galloped past within four miles of Loch Leven before Murray was fully awake in his chamber in the castle.

On the 7th of July a special envoy, sent to the English court, returned and with melancholy visage brought angry injunctions to the Lennoxes to return,

but in secret conveyed a missive to the Queen in which Philip of Spain sanctioned her marriage with Darnley with a warmth and decision rare indeed in his correspondence.

It was all the lovers had been waiting for. Two days later they were privately married, and at eight o'clock in the summer twilight rode off to Lord Seton's house on the Firth of Forth. Let the reader, as Master Knox would say, note the place. The papal dispensation, he may also note, had not yet arrived. As a matter of fact it was not signed at Rome till the end of September. It is the measure of her infatuation that so good a Catholic as Mary could marry her cousin without a dispensation. This would at a later time have been a sufficient reason for a divorce if a mere divorce had sufficed to solve the Darnley difficulty.

On the 28th of July, in defiance of Elisabeth and with three of her most important kinsmen on the edge of rebellion, Mary was publicly married to Darnley in the chapel of Holyrood. Yet to those about her Mary had, at times, seemed anxious and depressed, like one that has "a misliking of her own deeds."

There is a painful interest in following the demeanour of Darnley through those months of courtship. We saw him in the early days gracious to all and bent on popularity. But soon it seemed as if the undisciplined boy had nothing more urgent to do than to make enemies of the older men, men whose vindictiveness and pride and relentless hate his slender understanding could not gauge. In a mischievous moment Lord Robert had shown him on a map the large estates of the Earl of Murray, and, as if resenting encroachments on a kingdom already his, Darnley

pronounced them too large. He had to apologise to Murray for his rash words, the first of other apologies he was to be forced to make. Nor were rash words his sole offence. The feud between the Lennoxes and Hamiltons had always run high. Probably the feverishness of measles was added to Darnley's natural pettishness when he declared that he would break the Duke's pate for him—the Duke being old enough to be his grandfather! He actually drew his dagger on the Justice Clerk, one of his own supporters, who had to break a disappointment to him. His bursts of childish rage have led historians to believe that even in these early days he indulged in those bouts of drinking which later caused Mary such painful mortification. He was no less frivolous than violent. When Elisabeth's peremptory recall was announced to Lennox and his son, Mary wept; Lennox was downcast but Darnley treated the message with airy insolence. The basest side of his character appears in his treatment of Mary. There is no indication that he gave any affection in return for the passionate, self-forgetful devotion she lavished on him.

From the moment she gave him her heart, she gave him also "honour, submission and obedience as to her husband and king." He had no sense of her generosity and condescension in this. The delusion of "next heir to the throne" had been dinned into his ears from childhood. In all she bestowed he thanklessly saw only his due and his deservings. One wonders if anything could have burnt the stupidity out of such a man. It certainly needed no prophetic gift in Randolph to fear that such a creature "could have no long life among this people."

CHAPTER IX

RICCIO'S MURDER

August 1565—March 1566

IMMEDIATELY after her marriage Mary was face to face with open rebellion. She was well prepared for it, nay, she had precipitated it by summoning her brother to appear in his own justification. This he not unnaturally refused to do, and on August 6th he was "put to the horn."

Murray calculated that the situation of 1559 would be repeated with improved conditions. For five years the preachers had had their way and their say. It was not too much to expect that they had raised up a Protestant power solid and stout to fight against the idolatry they denounced. If it had been Elisabeth's interest to interfere between Mary of Guise and her subjects, would she be less eager to strike a blow at a rival whose designs on her throne had become a definite menace? There was much to justify these calculations but they were entirely falsified by the event.

The promptitude of Mary's action paralysed the rank and file of the Protestants. The citizens of Edinburgh, Knox's congregation, closed their doors and their purses to Murray's appeal, and at the sound of Erskine's guns from the Castle, urged him to quit their town. The gift of £3000 which Randolph smuggled into the hands of Lady Murray was as far

as Elisabeth would go in fulfilling her promise. She could not risk a quarrel with Mary with her own Catholic subjects ready to rise at the first signal from Spain.

After weary marches and flat failure to raise the country, Murray and his confederates found themselves in October at Dumfries, lacking soldiers, money, credit or hope of help from England. This unexpected result was entirely due to the high spirit and promptitude of the Queen. Even before her wedding she had summoned her lieges to meet her in Edinburgh within fifteen days "boden in feir of war." Her object was to secure allies abroad and gather round her efficient servants at home. Riccio and she sent urgent messages to the King of Spain and to the Pope entreating for help in the shape of money, and representing their present jeopardy as due to religious differences with her subjects.

Half of her nobles were among the factious; of those who remained, there were few whom she could really trust. Lethington had not joined his old friends —love of Mary Fleming prevented his deserting her mistress—but there was room for only one confidential secretary and it was a serious mortification to Lethington to see his post occupied by an Italian upstart. Morton could be calculated on to consult nothing but his own interests. Others such as Ruthven had ties of kinship with the Lennoxes but were accustomed to act with the Protestant lords. Mary needed strong men at her side whose interest it would be to be faithful to her. Lord Gordon, the representative of the Huntlys, was released from his long captivity and restored to his title. His hatred of the Earl of Murray would be sufficient guarantee

of his faithfulness. And at the end of August she summoned from France the Earl of Bothwell.

In the previous March that keen observer, Kirkcaldy of Grange, had said that Mary kept Bothwell in her pocket to shake out against her enemies. She knew his serviceableness; he knew that her enemies were his enemies, beyond this there seemed as yet to be no tie between them. In the preceding spring [1565] Bothwell, braving the law and the Queen's authority, had dared to return to his home on the Borders. Mary raised no finger to restore him when he should have "stood his day of law" in Edinburgh. Murray was suffered without remonstrance to occupy the city with 6000 men. If such methods of overriding law and justice were in those wild days employed by men like Murray and Knox, it can hardly be wondered at that Bothwell followed the precedent on a later "day of law." On this occasion he sullenly recognised the strength of his enemies and withdrew again to France. Bothwell had reason enough to hate Murray and Lethington if there were any truth in the story he alleged. One of his servants confessed in a moment of panic that he and two others had been bribed by his enemies to murder their master. They were actually on the door-step of his chamber with intent to murder, when the dread of his fierceness threw such a chill upon them that they collapsed and in terror fled from the castle. A brave, fierce soldier of fortune, Bothwell was as unscrupulous with his tongue as he was violent with his sword. "His own Queen and the Queen of England would not together make one honest woman," he scoffed, and doubtless the words had been reported to the Scottish Queen. Rough and insolent, he was still a man and

a soldier, and Lennox and his son were neither. So, such as he was, Bothwell was the man for Mary's purpose. She herself—it is the hostile Knox who is our authority—was the best man in the country, a far more notable warrior than the boy in the fine gilded corslet by her side. She unaffectedly loved the stir of camps, the fierce joy of fighting, the eager pursuit of revenge. In this she was a true daughter of the House of Guise, the kinswoman of men who would risk a defeat by their inability to resist the hazard of a brilliant cavalry charge, men who bore the nickname of "Le Balafré" as an hereditary title. In the wet and slush and shortening days of a Scottish autumn, "albeit the most part waxed weary, yet the Queen's courage increased manlike so much that she was ever with the foremost."

It was at Dumfries that Murray, beaten, disheartened and alarmed, turned a cruel and cowardly weapon against his sister. To Drury, the special envoy from England, and to Bedford—both his correspondents—he gave hints of horrid scandals which he might reveal. "His sister hated him," he averred, "because he knew that concerning her which respect would not suffer him to reveal." This is the first suggestion we have of the Riccio slanders. Murray was the author of them in the first place; Elisabeth was not slow to report them with feigned reluctance to the French ambassador. By the end of October Murray and his associates had fled to England, there to suffer public mortification at the hands of the unscrupulous Queen. But that belongs to the story of Murray—a story, curiously enough, still unwritten.

Mary had cleared her path of her enemies; her credit stood high. She had comfortable assurances

from her allies abroad. But if she thought that she was at last to rule at her pleasure, she was quickly to learn that there is no bondage so great as that of a high spirited woman married to a self-willed fool. As early as December Randolph reports friction between them. With a conventional smile he speaks of *amantium iræ*. Unfortunately the differences lay far deeper, in a fundamental inequality of nature. Mary had instinctive authority, a lifelong habit of rule, an unusual power of giving her whole energies to affairs. Darnley had merely the restless desire of an inefficient and conceited boy to make himself felt and to hamper other men's plans with his own self-importance. There was bound to be friction with every decision, with every act, public or private. The first important disagreement was early in September. Darnley, regarding the kingdom merely as his family inheritance, demanded the governorship of the Border for his father. Instead Mary appointed Bothwell, himself a Borderer and allied with all the bravest and fiercest Border families, and a sworn enemy to England. She knew the character of Lennox and had been irritated by the accounts that had reached her of his extortions at Glasgow.

All this autumn her mind was set on further ambitions and foreign alliances and subsidies to be obtained from the Pope and the King of Spain. Closeted with Riccio she worked out her daring and subtle schemes, ignoring the sulky frivolous boy incapable of counsel, but furious at being ignored.

After a time it is evident that she not only excluded him from her counsels, but shaped her policy in total disregard of his feelings and interests. In August she had insisted to Elisabeth's envoy that

her husband should receive the title of king, but when it suited her later on to conciliate her cousin, the husband was quietly dropped into the background.

It was good policy on her part to grant a mitigated pardon to old Chatelherault and his sons for the part they had taken in the rebellion, but she did it with the greater alacrity that the pardon of their rivals was a blow to her husband and his father. With vain importunity did both weary Mary about the granting of the crown matrimonial—a title that would bestow equal rights during Mary's life-time and undisputed succession to the throne if he survived her. On this point Mary was firm. So the king hunted and hawked, going off on sporting expeditions to Peebles and into Fife, signed documents when the humour took him, neglected his wife when she was ill and direfully disgraced her by his brawling dissipated habits. Once, when they were guests of a certain honourable burgher in Edinburgh, Mary with tears tried to restrain her husband from drinking to excess and encouraging others to do the same. Rambouillet, a French nobleman, was sent from the French king to confer on him the Order of the Cockle, and the young king thought it a good joke to mark the occasion by making two of his gentlemen intoxicated with *aqua composita* (probably whisky). It is small wonder that Mary, with angry contempt, removed him from her counsels. A stamp was made of his signature and this Riccio kept and appended to documents.

Unable to bend her judgment to his will, and feeling his hold on her affections going fast, Darnley was in the mood when he must oppose and thwart. She was in a careless and worldly vein at Christmas

time (1565), sitting up late into the night playing cards with Riccio and others, and Darnley must needs point the moral at her by the punctiliousness of his religious exercises; he was in the excited, embittered state when evil suggestions find ready response.

Yet if Darnley had been a little older, or if he had had any instincts of natural affection or the first elements of manliness, one fact should have stood between him and the cruel treachery to which he was to lend himself. Mary was about to become the mother of his child. She herself knew the strength that the possession of an heir would be to her political position, and elated with her far-off ambitions and schemes she was curiously blind to what was going on about her.

In her early married days she had sought to pacify the Protestants by proclamations disclaiming any intention of altering religion and by sending Darnley to St Giles to lose his temper over Knox's sermon; but now her foreign negotiations could not be kept secret, and the Protestants were anxious, suspicious and bitterly incensed against that "vile knave Davie." His fine clothes, his greed, his confidential airs with Mary infuriated the nobles, though the proudest of them could cringe and flatter the intrusive foreigner if it served their interest. Even Murray sent him a diamond and a humble letter from Newcastle.

Besides her faithful and futile following, Setons, Livingstons, Flemings and Athol, Mary could count on the loyalty of Huntly and Bothwell. Common interests and a common lawlessness of character had drawn the two young noblemen together. It was probably only by hard pressure that Huntly had persuaded his grave young sister Lady Jean Gordon to marry his friend. She was in love with Ogilvy of

JAMES HEPBURN, EARL OF BOTHWELL

JEAN GORDON, LADY BOTHWELL

Boyne, but a girl's affections counted for little in the marriages of the time. Nor had her religious scruples received greater consideration. She was a devout Catholic, and Bothwell, that robust Protestant, refused to be married without sermon and minister in the Church of the Canongate. There were other considerations which must have weighed with Lady Jean. Bothwell's amours had been notorious. He must have been quite young when he was hand-fasted to a lady of the house of Beaton, a strange, powerful woman afterwards married to the Laird of Buccleuch and credited with practising magic. A more shameless and serious matter was Bothwell's actual marriage with a noble Danish lady, Anne Trondesön. He had passed to Denmark on his way to France to solicit help for Mary of Guise, had there met the lady, married her, and departed with her through Germany. There at a seaport town he heartlessly deserted her, sailing away with all the money she had brought him as dowry. There is a tradition that after his banishment in 1562, she came to Scotland to seek for her husband, and was received at Queen Mary's court. The story at any rate must have been known to the Queen.

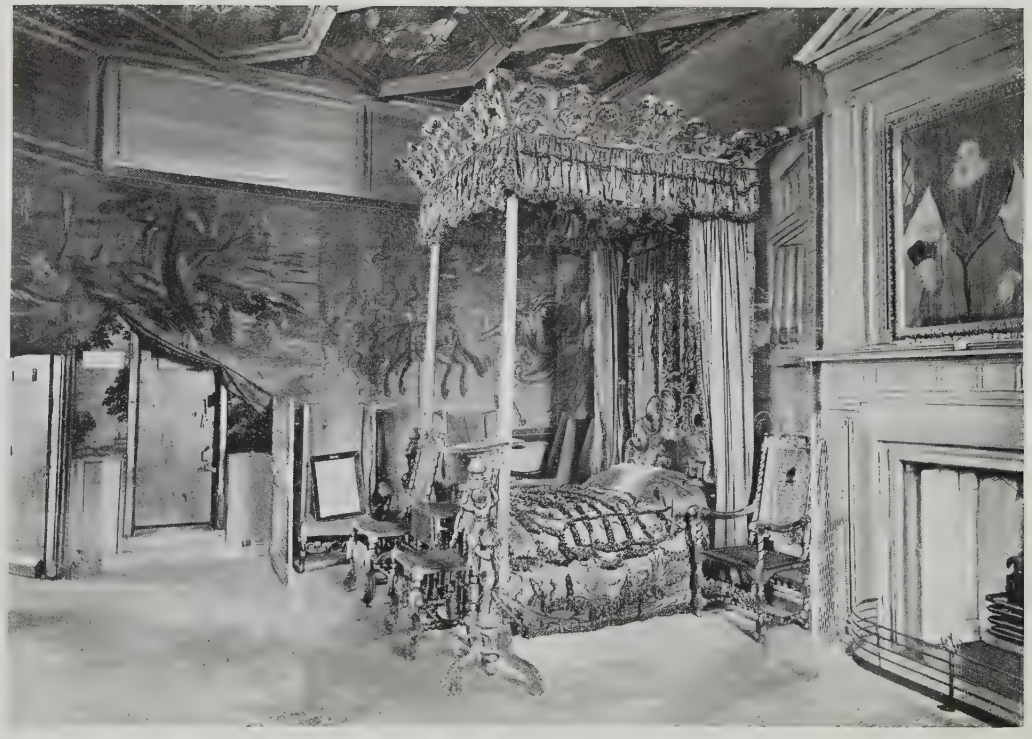
The wedding of Bothwell and Lady Jean Gordon took place on the 22nd of February (1566). Mary signed the contract and gave the bride her wedding-gown. Of all the women whom he loved and betrayed this sad young wife seems to have had the firmest hold of Bothwell's affection and respect.

If Mary could have brought herself to pardon Murray and his associates she would have cut the ground from under the feet of her enemies. One of the honestest of her friends, Elisabeth's servant

Throckmorton, wrote frankly and kindly declaring that such a step would greatly forward her cause among English Protestants. But the injuries she had suffered had passed like poison into her blood. She summoned for an early date in February a Parliament at which the rebel lords should be forfeited.

All hostile elements drew secretly together during February. Devout Protestants, keeping a national fast, felt vaguely that vengeance and deliverance were in the air. By the end of February Randolph—at Berwick now shut out of the country by Mary on the discovery of the support he had given her rebels—and Bedford knew that a plot was being formed. Lethington wrote significantly to Cecil of "chopping at the very root of the mischief." Morton had his own grievance in the expected transference of the chancellor's seals from himself to Riccio. Not one of these men but had grudges against one another, not one but had received benefits from the generous hand of the Queen, yet neither her youth nor the child who stirred under her heart appealed to the pity or loyalty of any of them. An instrument was needed to cover their guilt with a show of legality. The boy Darnley, muddled in wits, sore in his feelings and open to any flattery, was a tool made to their hands. Riccio stood between him and the crown matrimonial; he was easily persuaded that Riccio stood between him and his wife.

Kinsmen and connections of his on the Douglas side—strangely reviving the old Douglas animosity to the Stuarts—met in secret conclave round old Ruthven's sick-bed. Messengers passed to the banished lords at Newcastle, Murray (who had refused his consent to the Darnley marriage because he feared



MARY'S CHAMBER AT HOLYROOD

that "he would do little to forward the cause of Christ") swore to support his quarrel against all his enemies, without exception, and to secure for him the crown matrimonial. Darnley, the hope of the Catholics, undertook to establish the Protestant religion and restore the banished lords.

On Thursday, 7th March, Mary rode to the Tolbooth to open Parliament. Darnley from shame or sulkiness or pure frivolity refused to accompany her, and all that day rode races on the sands of Leith.

On Saturday at seven in the evening Mary with Riccio and her half-sister the Countess of Argyll, her brother Lord Robert, and with the equerry Arthur Erskine, in waiting, sat down to supper in a little slip of a room, opening out of Mary's bedchamber at Holyrood. Behind the arras of the bedchamber a small winding private staircase led down to Darnley's apartment. There the conspirators had come together. Huntly, Bothwell, Athol and other lords of Mary's following were in their quarters in Holyrood.

While the supper was proceeding, Darnley appeared at the entrance of the little room. His appearance there uninvited aroused his wife's suspicions; when however the white, gaunt face of Ruthven in his steel cap, and other crowding, menacing figures filled the doorway, Mary recognised instantly and without a shadow of doubt the object of their coming. Her first instinct was to rise and thrust her womanly helplessness, her royal immunity, between the cowering, blanching victim and his murderers; her next to turn with swift withering conviction on her husband, "Is this your work?" She had to submit to be held in his hated control while lights went out and the board toppled over and, in the darkness, the

shrieking wretch was dragged through the neighbouring room and hacked and stabbed to death.

From the court below came the clash of arms and the ill-omened cry "A Douglas! A Douglas!" Huntly and Bothwell had striven to reach the stairs but were driven back and took refuge in their own quarters. Some explanations, hurried and lame, were offered them, they sullenly acquiesced, but in the night escaped by back windows and fled.

Coming out of the merciful swoon which, for the moment, had dulled her senses, Mary first of all recovered her political prudence, and gave orders that the Secretary's desk, containing her cipher and foreign correspondence, should be brought to her at once. Staggering and moribund, Ruthven sat down in her presence and called for wine. With bitter scorn she railed on him and on the dull, brutalised boy who called her wife. But for once she was powerless; keen wit and rarest fascination are as helpless as simplicity before brute force. At one moment help seemed near; the trampling of feet outside announced the arrival of the city guard, and from below the window came the Provost's voice asking if all were well with the Queen. But when she would have moved forward Lindsay brutally threatened to cut her in collops and throw her out, and Darnley, leaning from the window, assured the townsmen that all was well.

They left her at last; their sworn followers guarding her room and intruding on her privacy. Some accounts describe her as spending the night alone, her ladies shut up in another part of the palace. Years afterwards Nau her secretary, who wrote down her own recollections of these events, got the impression that old Lady Huntly spent the night with her.

Betrayed, outraged, agitated with the pitiful agitation incident to her state, she spent the night pacing up and down, her high spirit and subtle wit already planning escape and revenge. Her ladies returned to her next day. Old Lady Huntly brought a message from her son and from Bothwell suggesting that she might escape from a window; the old lady actually brought a rope concealed in a dinner dish, to further the plan. By six in the evening the Newcastle lords drew rein at the door. With his usual prudence Murray had timed his arrival just twenty-four hours after the crime was committed.

Next morning Mary sent for him and when they met, it seemed for a moment, as if the two children of James V. might at last have understood each other. She threw herself into his arms crying, "If you had been here, you would not have let them do it," and the tears rose in the eyes of Murray. But both were too deeply committed to their former selves, and by the afternoon Mary silently recognised how completely her brother had thrown in his lot with the other side.

There was another way of escape and an easier. Could she but disguise her repugnance to her husband, she knew the ascendency she could at any moment gain over him. She opened his eyes relentlessly to the danger he was in, among traitors and murderers who had used him for their own ends. When terror had delivered him into her hands, she steadily set herself to cajole and flatter him. He must have the guard removed that night and join her in her flight to Dunbar. An alarm of illness, the midwife's hurried advent, forced the lords—sceptical and reluctant as they were—to accede to the request to have the guards removed.

At midnight Mary and Darnley groped their way through a ruinous gap in the palace wall and stumbled through the charnel house where Riccio's grave was still raw and new. Was it Darnley himself or the female attendant who narrated to Lennox that Mary had paused above it and sworn that "a fatter than Riccio should lie as low ere another year was out?" Darnley is said to have muttered some words of vague remorse.

Outside the Abbey walls, in the frosty air, stood the horses; the faithful equerry, Arthur Erskine, was in charge. The Laird of Traquair, Darnley's servant Antony Standen, and the waiting woman made up the little company.

It seemed barely possible that the escape of so many could be unobserved. Darnley looked round constantly in abject terror. Mary rode on a pillion behind Erskine who moderated his pace to suit her weakness, so fearful was she of imperilling the life of her child. Hereupon the king put himself into a fury: "Come on," he said, "in God's name come on. If this baby dies we can have more." The words were to rankle in Mary's memory all her life. At the moment they excited bitter scorn. "She bade him push on and take care of himself. This he did very thoughtlessly." Such was his panic that he hardly noticed the contempt of men's faces nor the plainness of their reproaches when finally the party came up with Bothwell and Huntly and their following. At Dunbar Mary found chill, unfurnished rooms; the only food forthcoming consisted of eggs, which she prepared with her own hand. No practical difficulty, small or great, ever found her without immediate resource.

CHAPTER X

JEDBURGH

March 1566—November 1566

ON Monday, 11th March, we have seen Mary a prisoner in her own palace, in fear of her life; physically in anxious plight; her friends far-off; her enemies triumphant and insolent; all her schemes apparently overthrown. A week later, she rode in triumph up the High Street of Edinburgh. Her courage and promptitude had simply reversed the position. In the days that followed her flight to Dunbar, Glencairn and Rothes had submitted and been pardoned. An army under Bothwell and Huntly had rallied round her. The conspirators, seeing that the game was up, fled to England. They had at least the generosity to bid Murray stay and make his own peace regardless of them. Sir James Melville met Mary at Haddington with a submissive letter from her brother. So little perception had Darnley of the position he occupied in men's opinion that he asked Melville if Murray had sent no message for him.

Rather than occupy the haunted rooms at Holyrood Mary lived in a house in the High Street till the Castle could be prepared for her use. Her vengeance could only reach some minor actors in the crime, betrayed by Darnley. He himself appeared before the Privy Council to declare his innocence of all conspiracy. Mary might pretend to shut her eyes to what her

quick wits had discovered in the first moment of the crime. But those whose friends had been betrayed had no interest to serve in leaving a rag to cover the shame of the king. Relentlessly they laid before Mary's eyes the bond by which her husband had tried to secure her crown for himself at the price of her danger and dishonour.

For this wretched boy of twenty there was no place left for repentance. Mary was at her old royal task of pardoning and reconciling; even Bothwell and Murray consented to a pretence of reconciliation. Only for Darnley was neither forgiveness nor alliance. He lived in a state of piteous isolation. Even his father, banished to his own lands in the west, refused to forgive his son for leaving him behind in Holyrood on the night of the flight. So abject was Darnley, that to avoid the presence of the new French ambassador, he feigned to be ill. Nor did the pretence avail; the ambassador visited him in company of the Queen and Privy Council and reproached him severely for his conduct.

Only once do we catch a momentary softening of Mary's feelings towards her husband. To the women of that day the shadow of death lay always athwart the hour of birth. Even in early prosperous days Mary had spoken to Throckmorton as if the thought of death were neither strange nor unwelcome to her. Facing the gravity of the issue, she made her will in the month of May. No kinsman, no servant, no friend of youth was forgotten. She left many valuables to the king, among others "the ring wherewith he married me."

If the fear of death weighed lightly with this brave woman there were other dangers which she foresaw and provided against. What if Murray should seize the hour of her helplessness to contrive the return of

Morton and his crew, or even to invite an invading English army? Bothwell and his friends advised her to put her half-brother in ward. She did more wisely. Bothwell, the only nobleman free from all suspicion of trafficking with England, was set to guard the Border. Murray and Argyle with their wives she invited to be with her in the castle of Edinburgh where the faithful Lord Erskine commanded the guns.

Before noon on the 19th of June Mary Beaton—married now to Lady Bothwell's old lover Ogilvy of Boyne—sped James Melville on his way to London with the news of the birth of a man-child, an heir born to Mary and Elisabeth alike. It was a cry from the depths of nature, that bitter remark of Elisabeth's. "The Queen of Scots hath a fair son and I am a barren stock." A son, one who united the claims of both sides of the house, was politically an important additional strength to Mary; otherwise the baby afforded her little pleasure. "He is only too much your son," she had said to Darnley when he was brought in to see and acknowledge his child, referring probably to some physical defect in the boy.

Mary made an indifferent recovery, was restless and depressed, and the dislike she had of Darnley became an uncontrollable repugnance, a matter of nerves and instincts. She longed for change and excitement and to get away from his presence. Bothwell was High Admiral and he and his sailors carried her up the Forth on one of his ships to Alloa where she was to be the guest of the Earl of Mar. Murray accompanied her and his presence should be guarantee enough of the propriety of the expedition, but Buchanan, writing under Murray's inspiration, makes it one of

the licentious acts of which he accuses the Queen and Bothwell. Bedford, writing at this time but from the distance of Berwick, reported that Bothwell ruled all at court and was hated much as Riccio had been. He reported also that the Queen would suffer no one to be friends with her husband, even quarrelling with her complacent courtier Sir James Melville for complimenting the king with the gift of a spaniel. Darnley visited his wife at Alloa, but received so iron a welcome that he stayed but one day. More cordial was the welcome accorded to Lethington when he was admitted to Mary's presence. By September he had secured something like his old standing, and that autumn married his faithful Fleming.

She was the third Mary whom marriage had removed from her mistress' side. Now if ever the Queen required the companionship of prudent and affectionate ladies. Sick in body, her affections deadened by the disillusionment of her disastrous marriage, she was just in the condition to fall a prey to any excitement or passion. And she fell under evil influences. Of Mary Seton—evidently the least influential of the four—we hear nothing at this time, but a certain elderly woman, a Mrs Forbes of Reres, seems to have been in constant attendance on the Queen. A sister of the uncanny Lady of Buccleuch, she herself had been light in her youth and gossip had even connected her name with her sister's lover, Lord Bothwell. Though now grown elderly and stout she had gained neither in gravity nor propriety. The gallantries of which she could no longer be the object were still her absorbing concern in life. The old tie with Bothwell made her the active, subservient agent of his interests. That Mary should have tolerated and even sought the familiarity

of such a woman indicates the evil excitement that was secretly taking hold on her.

Lady Reres was in attendance on the Queen when, in September, Mary lodged for some days in a house in the Canongate, to go into the business of her revenues. A garden sloped from the back of this house and adjoining it was the garden belonging to one Mr David Chalmers. He was a creature of Bothwell's and to his house the earl was accustomed to resort. On this juxtaposition Buchanan founds the grossest and least credible of his scandalous stories. Of contemporary evidence of these there is no trace; indeed du Croc the French ambassador wrote at this time that he had never seen Mary more loved, esteemed and honoured by her people. And at the very time when the scandals, of which he recounts every particular, were supposed to be taking place, Master George Buchanan was shut up polishing Latin verses in praise of the Queen's chastity and wisdom, for the approaching christening festivity.

Darnley's impenetrable stupidity prevented his seeing that the only possible policy for him was to keep out of everyone's way. He did the opposite of this. He would force some manifestation of feeling from his wife, some return of fondness, some fear, even some expression of irritation. He had dared to write to the Catholic princes complaining of Mary's lukewarmness in religion, but his character and position were clearly understood in all European courts. Now he suddenly appeared in Edinburgh with a wild scheme of sailing off in a ship to France or Flanders, or on a piratical raid on the Scilly Islands, anything to force Mary into some expression of feeling towards him.

She had in perfection the feminine art of putting

her adversary in the wrong. She summoned the Privy Council, invited the presence of the French ambassador, and, standing before them all, dangerous in her beauty and dignified meekness, took the sulky boy by the hand and asked him to state clearly and publicly if she had done him any wrong. With those strange level eyes on him and hostile faces all around, Darnley lost what presence of mind he might have had. After a muttered excuse he took his leave of her with "Adieu Madame, you shall not see my face for a long space."

His cowardice irritated her as much as his perfidy. "She was one who loved to hear of brave deeds even in an enemy." It was at Borthwick on her way to Jedburgh to hold an assize, that she learned that in an affray with a Border robber, Bothwell had received a severe sword wound and had barely escaped with his life. In her heart she made bitter comparisons between the strong man wounded in her service and the frivolous boy who was merely a torment and mortification to her. Some months later looking at his fair face flushed with wine or temper she taunted him, saying that it would "do him good to be a little daggered like my Lord of Bothwell."

Murray was with his sister at Jedburgh. Murray knew that for a whole week she was occupied in holding Justice Courts before she rode in his company to visit Bothwell at Hermitage; but Murray suffered Buchanan to make wild assertions about this ride in his "Detectio." In the short October day Mary and her brother and her suite rode to Hermitage and back over rough pathless moors. The next day Mary fell ill with a sudden mysterious attack in which she lay for some hours like one dead. In the hall and

HERMITAGE CASTLE

galleries of that high roofed house in Jedburgh men met with anxious brows. There were whispered counsels, mutual suspicions, sudden alliances, such as attend the mortal sickness of kings. But to the biographer of Mary these days when her life hung in the balance, are like a sudden opening between thunderclouds through which the blue, authentic Heaven is visible. Perplexed, driven by earthly passions, fiercely resentful of wrongs as she was, there was in Mary, as there was in her mother and in her uncle, Duke Francis, an inalienable instinct for the things of the spirit. When death approached any of these three generous and living souls, the passions, ambitions, nay, the very sins which had filled their days seemed to slip off them like a garment, and they faced death with head erect and steady eyes as one with whom they had long been reconciled.

The age was different from our own. Men spent their lives among lusts and sufferings and deeds of violence and of heroism, and beyond such life they saw clearly two alternatives; endless torment or a rapture of peace and glory. Some sudden, miraculous interposition of mercy, some corresponding movement of appropriating faith were a necessity postulated by human nature, a necessity met by Catholicism and Protestantism alike. For the faithful believer the Church had strong arms of comfort in the sacraments and in assurances of participation in a kingdom of which she held the keys. For this Protestantism, stooping to human weakness, had substituted a miraculous change in the sinner's own apprehension, a conviction that by no sin of his own could he lose his place among the elect, if elect he were. Ruthven, dying a few months after the murder of Riccio,

had a comfortable vision of angels in the hour of death.

Mary, believing herself to be *in extremis* in Jedburgh, declared that she lightlied the honours and triumphs in which she had lived, and cast herself at the feet of her Creator ready to embrace His will. She reminded her noblemen that she had never pressed them in their consciences, and she pleaded for those of the old Faith Catholic, "and if ye knew what it were of a person that is in extremity as I am, and that it behoved him to think that he maun render count of his faults as I do, ye would never press them." Then turning to her half-brother she added impressively, "I pray you brother, Earl of Murray, that you trouble none." Her enemies and those who had repaid her kindness with ingratitude she left to the judgment of God.

There was to be no such swift and complete solution of the difficulties that beset Mary's path, her strong vitality reasserted itself and she recovered quickly. Darnley had been duly informed of his wife's illness and danger, but he delayed so long that his tardy appearance seemed almost an affront and only added to Mary's irritation against him. In marked contrast was the welcome accorded to Bothwell, who had caused himself to be carried to Jedburgh in a litter as soon as his state allowed him to be moved. By the middle of November Mary had returned to Edinburgh after visiting the eastern border, but still avoiding Holyrood she was staying at Craigmillar, a castle within a few miles of the town. With returning health the nature of her position became only more galling. If no way were found to free her from her husband, she declared at times that

THE HOUSE WHERE QUEEN MARY LODGED AT JEDBURGH

she would lay hands on herself. Others than Mary had come to look on the removal of Darnley as a necessity. Some sort of bond had been signed against him in the autumn of this year. Murray and Lethington were pledged to work for the restoration of Morton and his friends; they were not the men to let an obstacle like Darnley stick in their path. Bothwell, too, had his own ends to serve in his removal.

The only account we have of the actual compact made at Craigmillar is from the two members, least vitally interested, Argyll and Huntly. Their evidence is not beyond suspicion of prejudice but it is all we have to go on. According to their narrative Lethington was the chief contriver of the scheme, he and Murray proposed it to Huntly and Argyll and then brought Bothwell into it. There was no need that Mary should be categorically informed of any plot or bond, nor be required to give formal consent to what they had in hand. She demurred at the project for a divorce, thinking it would injure the position of her son. Lethington, reassuring her, hinted at another more sinister means of meeting the difficulty. "Madam soucy ye not; we are here of the principal of your grace's nobility and Council that shall find the moyen that your Majesty shall be quit of him without prejudice to your son; and albeit my Lord of Murray here present be little less scrupulous for a Protestant than your grace is for ane Papist, I am assured he will look through his fingers thereto and will behold our doings and say nothing thereto." Historians may thank Lethington for a phrase that touches off the character of Murray as no analysis could do. A bond was signed and probably all the signatories had copies. Bothwell

certainly had in his possession a bond by which Huntly, Argyll, Lethington, and Bothwell himself undertook to support one another in "the putting forth by one way or other" of the "young fool and proud tyrant," the king. A few months later he showed this document to one of his followers, Hepburn of Bowton, signed with the four names, with the addition of Sir James Balfour's; Lethington's signature is at the bottom with a long space between his name and the next above; a space to be filled with nobler signatures that were never obtained.

CHAPTER XI

KIRK O' FIELD

December 1566—February 1567

FOR a time at least Mary could subordinate to her delight in pomp and ceremonial both her restless unhappiness and those stirrings of passion which in turn offered wild hopes of deliverance and threatened more complicated distress. The baptism of her son at Stirling was in appearance the triumphant moment of her life (December 17).

Such power and security had she acquired in her Protestant kingdom that no remonstrance was made against her determination to have the full Catholic ceremonial performed by Archbishop Hamilton. She had borne part in costlier pageants, but none of such significance as this one when the sovereigns of France and England stood sponsor at a Catholic font for the little heir of two Protestant kingdoms. In France she had merely been a Queen Consort; here she and she only was the central figure. That was the strange and ill-omened feature of the feast. The father of the little prince was indeed in the castle at Stirling but rigidly secluded, sulky, miserable, unable to appear yet refusing to go away. He was unwilling to meet the English ambassador, knowing that Bedford would certainly have received orders to ignore his claim to be addressed as king. If he were refused all part in the ceremonial he would at least stay to throw a shadow on his wife's triumph.

As if to mark his insignificance the suit of cloth of gold ordered for him was delayed by the tailor, while Bothwell pranked it in blue and Murray and Lethington wore red and green suits all of the Queen's ordering and giving. Special honour was paid to Bedford the English envoy, but he with those other stout Protestants, Murray and Bothwell and the Catholic Huntly, stood outside the chapel door while the rest of the company attended the Catholic order of baptism. Mary sat between the ambassadors of France and England at the banquet, serene, gracious, triumphant, equally ignoring the miserable husband eating his angry heart out in solitude, and the strong masterful man—courteous and subservient for the moment in his place in that great company—who was secretly acquiring such hold on her affections and her fears. When the lights were out and the compliments and gracious speeches had served their turn, she had fits of sadness; she would sigh at times and complain of the old pain in her side, and once du Croc the French ambassador surprised her weeping bitterly.

The air was heavy with rumours. When great crimes are on hand the secret must needs pass through many lower agents; men with consciences half affrighted hover round the subject in their common talk; hints and warnings crop up in unexpected places urging danger on dulled ears. Gossip had travelled to Paris and home again of a design of Darnley and his father to seize the child and set up a regency. On the other hand rumours of a design against Darnley had been spread in Glasgow the centre of the Lennox country. While the king was still at Stirling his father sent to warn him that

he was aimed at by certain agreements dating from Craigmillar.

The vague fear in which Darnley habitually lived took definite form when he learned that Mary had signed a pardon restoring the Riccio murderers. On that same day (Dec. 24) he rode from Stirling, falling sick with deadly sickness before he reached his father's house in Glasgow. Poison was of course suspected but the illness proved to be a virulent attack of smallpox.

A more ominous circumstance than the pardon of Morton, to us who are wise after the event, was the effort Mary made to restore his consistorial jurisdiction to Archbishop Hamilton. Such consistorial jurisdiction gave all decisions in cases of marriage and divorce into the hands of a bishop in his own diocese. Now the archbishop's diocese included the Lothians, and Bothwell's castle of Hailes was in East Lothian.

There was doom and dreadful resolutions in the air: it was time for Murray to remove himself out of sight and knowledge of what might be going on. He retired to St Andrews where he entertained the Earl of Bedford. Mary's restlessness was growing on her. We have no need to go to Buchanan's ugly calumnies to feel how evil a spell had fallen on this bright and beautiful woman. In these weeks of mid-winter she visited at the castles of several of her nobles, and everywhere and daily more intimately the Earl of Bothwell appeared at her side.

At last, but not till January 14th, Mary wrote to her husband offering to come and see him. His jealousy broke out in coarse insult. Messages, the most intimate and important, were often confided verbally to the

messenger in those days when writing was a tedious art to many. With what countenance could the Queen listen to some malapert groom reporting that her husband wished that Glasgow might be Hermitage and he the Earl of Bothwell as he lay there, and then he doubted not that she would be quickly with him undesired? Words sting only when love is still quick: nothing done or said by her husband could do more than deepen Mary's impatient loathing. He had some instinct of his own helplessness; as she approached, his mood of insolent petulance changed into abject submission and longing for reconciliation.

On January the 20th she rode out of Edinburgh, Bothwell accompanying her half-way to Lord Livingston's house, where she spent the night. Paris, Bothwell's confidential valet, had passed from his service into the Queen's; Joseph Riccio was her secretary and the ominous Lady Reres was her lady in waiting. Not without reason had Darnley inquired anxiously of her *avant-coureur* of whom her household was made up. Outside Glasgow she was met by various gentlemen. Among them was a servant of her husband's, Crawford of Jordanhill. He excused his master, old Lennox, that he had not come to meet her, saying that for various causes he was afraid to do so. "Against fear," Mary told him coldly, "there is no medicine."

Darnley was still lying sick in his father's house. He had been annoyed that lodgings had been provided for her elsewhere. She went to see him that evening before supper. Weak, excited, like a sick child, he wished her to stay longer, to give him his food, to sit up with him at night; he was querulous that she continued pensive. She could stand no

more than two hours at a time; the windows were closed, the air heavy and infected. In the far corner of the bed—his poor disfigured face perhaps already covered with his taffeta mask—lay the sick man tearfully affectionate, eagerly deprecating, at once fearful of the beautiful, watchful woman sitting at the further corner of his bed and yet clinging to her as to his one hope of safety. What was it, she asked, that he complained of in his letters. With a wail he poured out his boyish repentance and excuses always with the piteous overword "I am young."

So little, in his blind self-pity, did he understand the bitterly alienated woman by his side that he pleaded hard that all might be as it had been before, that they might be as husband and wife together. She made some sort of promise for the future, but vaguely and coldly. In the meantime he must be completely cured of his illness; she had brought a horse-litter, he must accompany her to Craigmillar and follow a course of treatment. Then she probed him on points difficult to evade or to answer, asking what rumours had reached him of plots formed against him at Craigmillar. He assured her that he was convinced that she who was his own flesh would do him no hurt. She was on dangerous ground when she asked his opinion of Lady Reres. He liked not her sort, he said, he prayed that she would always serve the Queen to her honour.

It was probably after Mary had left him on the second night that, nervous and restless, he called Crawford to him and related in full all his conversation with his wife. Crawford was suspicious of the horse-litter, it suggested the position of a prisoner. Nor had Craigmillar a reassuring sound. The sick man

assented, but added that he would put himself into her hands though she should cut his throat and besought God to be a judge unto them both. If Mary had come to her husband's sick bed to lure him to his death, it is clear from Darnley's words that she had used no flattering promises nor feminine guile. She had established her ascendency over him by a terrible fascination of fear. Her loathing for her husband as well as the nobler instincts of her nature made all blandishments hateful to her where he was concerned.

Meanwhile Bothwell, in consultation with Lethington and Sir James Balfour, had found Craigmillar inconvenient for the king's lodging.

On the south side of Edinburgh where the ground sloped up steeply from the valley of the Cowgate, lay the ruinous Collegiate Church of St Mary in the Fields. It lay just outside the city walls, a solitary place among its own fields and gardens. The Church was roofless, the houses built on the four sides of a quadrangle were deserted and, for the most part, ruinous; at their best they had been small, mean dwellings. On the north side of the square was a little two storeyed house abutting on the city wall. Small and inconvenient as it was, it was sufficiently in repair to permit of being hastily put in order for the king's accommodation. It belonged to Sir James Balfour's brother and could be hired without fuss or question.

The vaults consisted of a low cellar with a door opening through the city wall. Above this was the ground floor. It contained a long anteroom or hall with an outer door into the quadrangle, and a room with a second door opening into the garden. This room was prepared for the Queen and she seems to have occupied it for several nights. A small turn-

pike stair led to the upper storey consisting of the room prepared for the king and two small cabinets occupied by his servants.

Three doors entering from different quarters made the little house singularly accessible. The quality of the neighbourhood may be guessed from the fact that the lane on the other side of the wall, on which Darnley's window looked out, was called "The Thieves' Row." Only one other house stood near—also outside the walls—Hamilton House which was occupied at this time by the hereditary enemies of the Lennoxes, Archbishop Hamilton and his nephew Lord Claude. To this lonely and deserted dwelling Mary brought her husband at the end of January.

The inside of the house had indeed been sumptuously furnished with the Huntly tapestries from Strathbogie, Turkey carpets and beds of state. There was a constant crowd of people filling the tiny house. Darnley had only a few chamber boys of his own, young and helpless, but the servants of Mary and of Bothwell went in and out at their pleasure. It is startling, if true, that French Paris, Bothwell's confidential valet, now in Mary's service, talked confidentially to her while she washed her hands in her low bedroom. It was he who was sent by Margaret Carwood the queen's waiting-woman to fetch away the furred coverlet from her bed on Friday the 7th February.

During Mary's absence in Glasgow Bothwell had tried to strengthen the plot by the adherence of Morton. Set as he was on revenging himself on Darnley for his treacherous desertion, Morton was too selfishly prudent to risk again the life and liberty he had so recently hazarded. Without a written authorisation from the Queen he would take no active part. He

would look on grimly satisfied, and could be trusted to convey no whisper of warning to his young kinsman.

Wherever the question of Mary's guilt has been canvassed, whether in the conferences at York and Westminister or at the bar of history, the question has always hinged upon the authenticity of a certain letter which she has been accused of writing to Bothwell from Glasgow. In deciding her moral guilt there is another letter which weighs more heavily against her, a poor, boyish, happy letter of Darnley's written to his father three days before his death. "My Lord," it runs, "I have thought good to write to you by this bearer of my good health, I thank God, which is the sooner come through the good treatment of such as hath this good while concealed their good will; I mean of my love the Queen which, I assure you, hath all this while and yet doth use herself like a natural and loving wife." From this it is clear that under the stimulus of partnership Mary had brought herself to play that soft and alluring part which at Glasgow had been too abhorrent to her.

Yet there were circumstances which would have made anyone but Darnley uneasy. The envoy from the Duke of Savoy was in Edinburgh. Mary would not allow him to wait upon her husband, relentlessly reminding the latter that he would naturally resent the death of Riccio his former servant. Darnley might have seen that Riccio still ran in her mind. Men came in and out of his room; men who knew and men who suspected the doom that threatened him, and only one voice was raised in warning. Lord Robert was a mere boon companion, ready for any mischief or revelry, but Lord Robert felt pity where Murray felt none. On Friday the 7th February he gave

Darnley warning. The wretched boy under the spell of his wife's renewed kindness must needs carry the tale to her, betraying the only friend he had. Next morning she confronted her brother in Darnley's presence and no course was open to Lord Robert but complete denial and indignant reproaches against Darnley. So hot were both the young men that it would have come to blows between them—perhaps Mary hoped that it would—had not Murray interfered. This occurred on Saturday the 8th and probably suggested to Murray's unfailing instinct of prudence that it was time for him to be out of sight and hearing. He received a message that his wife was ill and on the morning of Sunday, 9th, departed to Fife to visit her.

It was the wedding-day of one of Mary's French servants. As usual Mary gave the wedding-gown and provided the feast. She supped that night with the Bishop of the Isles in Sir James Balfour's house in the company of Huntly, Cassilis and Bothwell. Between nine and ten the Queen with lighted torches went up the Black Friar's Wynd on her way to Kirk o' Field. Had any of her train cared to look behind they might have seen in the shadow of the narrow street two pack horses laden with bags led by two of Bothwell's serving men. It was not Bothwell's way to leave detail to the possible blundering of subordinates. At a "slap" [gap] in the wall he and his kinsman Hepburn of Ormiston and young Hay of Talla, "Bothwell's lambs," received the bags of powder from Wilson and Powrie his serving men.

In the Queen's room on the ground floor French Paris kept the passage door locked, and the powder was probably carried in by the garden door and piled

up on the floor. Meanwhile Bothwell had rejoined the party in the king's sick-room.

We have a detailed picture of the scene. The room was lit by the firelight and perhaps by some wax candles. The walls were hung with tapestry —curiously familiar it must have looked to Huntly's eyes. In one corner was a big bath covered in rude fashion by an old door. The bed was of brown-purple, a stately bed once the possession of Mary of Guise. In it lay Darnley in his taffeta mask. On a small table covered with green velvet Huntly, Bothwell and Cassilis played at dice. On a high chair covered with purple velvet drawn beside the bed, sat the Queen. She was in her gentlest mood, talking low and familiarly with her husband. Yet once—as if her tongue in spite of her will must speak truth and give warning—she reminded him that it was almost a year now since Riccio's death.

Once there were sounds from below and Bothwell slipped downstairs to order quiet.

On his return Paris appeared behind him ; it was the appointed signal ; Argyle knew it and rose. Mary rose too exclaiming that she must not forget her promise to Bastian to be present at his masque. When she said good-night to her husband she kissed him and gave him a ring.

It would seem that knowledge of the details of the crime had been kept from her. As she mounted her horse, the light of the torches showed Paris' face begrimed with powder "Jesus, Paris, how black you are," she cried impulsively.

In spite of the ring and the gracious manner Mary's remark about Riccio had agitated her husband. He repeated it uneasily to his chamber-child after

she was gone. Then together they sang a psalm. The psalm is given severally in two accounts as the fifty-fifth and fifth. It is strange how either fits into the circumstances. "There is no faithfulness in their mouth," runs the fifth Psalm, "their inward parts are very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue." Or if the psalm were the fifty-fifth they must have sung these words: "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it . . . but it was thou . . . my companion and my familiar friend." Then he drank to his servants and fell asleep.

If only one might believe that there had been no awaking! If only the poor soul, having taken his good-night of the world with holy words, had been hurled swiftly, abruptly to where there is reconcilement even for such as he! The facts forbid such imagining. His body with that of his page was found next morning lying at some distance from the shattered house, with limbs unbroken, clothes unscorched, their faces not even blackened.

In one of the confessions of the subordinate murderers, it was said that a certain Captain Cullen—one of Bothwell's followers and one experienced in war—had declared that explosives could not be depended on to destroy life. And in truth Nelson, one of Darnley's servants, was found alive under the wreck.

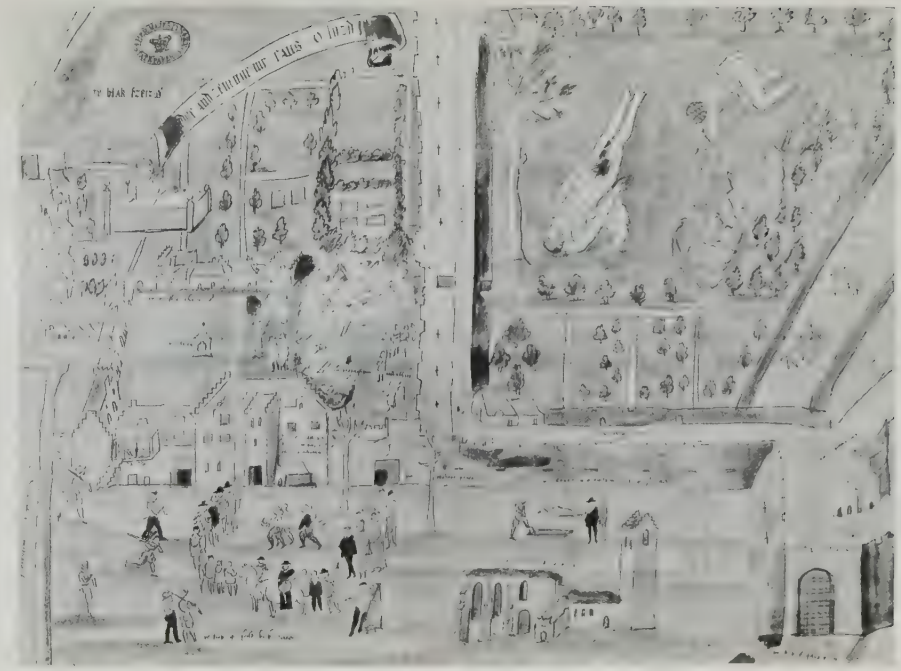
A woman who lived on the town side of the wall deponed before the Privy Council that lying awake in her bed before the explosion she had heard a piteous voice pleading for mercy in the name of Christ.

Darnley, it is probable, awakened from his first sleep to find his agonised fears a reality. Sounds

were heard from below not to be mistaken. Hastily putting on his furred bed gown, he would seem to have tried to escape with his servant by the window. He may have alighted among armed men guarding the house, or the noise he made climbing down the wall may have brought them in haste from the house and garden. Some say that he was seized and hurried to a neighbouring stable and there strangled. However it were, the unhappy boy would find himself alone and helpless, surrounded by familiar faces whose looks of angry hate brought to his brain the swift certainty of death, the hopelessness of struggle and of prayers.

Twenty years later at Fotheringay, Mary was to look round an assembly of England's most weighty counsellors and note the same implacable look on each grave face, "So many counsellors and none for me." Twenty-one years of penance we shall have to weigh against the brief agony of her boy husband.

But meanwhile pity had no more entrance than remorse into her "heart of diamond." She hated Darnley, but mere hatred to a creature brought so low could not have supplied sustaining motive in a heart as naturally generous as Mary's. She meant to remove Darnley because he stood between her and something that she rated higher than life, something that had come to be for the moment her very life. When her love for Bothwell began we, who discount the slanders of Buchanan, can never definitely determine. After the Riccio murder she had clearly come to lean on him as she leaned on no one else. He was courageous even as she was courageous, and she hated the cowardice of Darnley and distrusted the pusillanimity of Lethington. Murray had sickened



KIRK O' FIELD

her with hypocrisy and self-interest, and so far was Bothwell from being a hypocrite that even she could never persuade him to deviate from his professed Protestantism. Lethington, Murray, all the Protestant lords, in fact, had intrigued with England at one time or another, and were ready at any moment to accept pay from the English government and flatter Queen Elisabeth; Bothwell's pronounced hostility to both had never wavered. Selfish ambition he had, but it was not the deep-seated love of power of Murray nor the calculating greed of Morton; his was a gambler's ambition, the instinct to hazard all on a throw.

Mary persuaded herself that her love and her person were the stakes for which he was ready to risk everything. She believed it because she herself had staked everything. She was blinding herself wilfully, recklessly to the prohibitive barriers that lay between them. Below her politic brain, her courtly, civilised grace, her disciplined prudence lay a nature primitive and passionate, craving for self-surrender into the hands of another, stronger, more masterful than herself. This, with tragic infatuation, she thought she had found in one whose strength was mere brute courage, whose most romantic feeling was the passion of an hour, whose force of will was unscrupulous ignorance.

Mary stayed but one hour at the masque. When she retired to her own apartments in Holyrood, Bothwell remained some time in conversation with her. Was feeling so callous that each spoke plainly to the other, or did she look at him with sidelong eyes and white lips and speak of indifferent things?

Bothwell's movements that night are known

minutely by the confessions of his servants. Hastily changing his fine suit into rougher clothes, he slipped out into the night with a couple of servants.

"Quha is that?" from the sentinel below the south garden wall.

"Friends."

"Quhat friends?"

"My Lord Bothwell's friends," apparently a sufficient password.

There was a short stop at Ormiston's lodgings, a hurried call up a dark staircase, but prudence kept him irresponsive, and without delay the party passed on along the Friar's Wynd to the silent house beyond the walls.

Bothwell passed in through the gap, the servants waited a breathless half hour till three dark figures, Bothwell, Hepburn of Bowton, and Talla, appeared at the gap. Then the flash and thunder of an explosion and all scatter as they may.

Frightened citizens rushing to their doors saw parties of armed men speeding down the wynd.

One spirited woman, a servant in Hamilton House, seized one of the fliers by the cloak and felt it to be silk, no serving man's apparel. It could never be established who and how many were present. Doubtless, Bothwell had taken sufficient security that Huntly and Lethington should bear their share. A certain Archibald Douglas, a cousin and henchman of Morton, was certainly present, one of his velvet slippers was lost on the scene of the murder; he would hardly have been present without the connivance of Morton. Some said that a moment after the explosion a light was suddenly extinguished in the archbishop's house close at hand.

For years afterwards, when men wished to ruin a political adversary, they brought and could generally substantiate an accusation of being "art and part" in the king's murder.

Bothwell and his servants failed to scramble over the city wall as they had intended, probably his hand was still stiff from the wound of six months before. They had to brave the certainty of recognition and a second time to rouse the keeper of the Netherbow Port. Bothwell was safely in his room and feigning sleep when a frantic knocking at his door told him that the palace was aroused. Mary's servant, George Hacket, was not in the secret. He could not speak articulately with terror. "The king's house is blown up and I trow the king is slain!" "Fie Treason!" cried Bothwell starting up.

With what countenance did he and Huntly break the news to the Queen? For one so shameless it was an easier matter to head the body of armed men who hurried through streets, still dark but all alive with terrified, chattering citizens, to the scene of the murder. He commanded the two bodies to be carried into a stable near, where neither piety nor decency provided any observance of the dead.

Next morning the abject valet Paris, creeping with white terror-stricken face into Holyrood was met by Bothwell with surly taunts. Why should he look so sickly over an affair in which gentlemen—indicating Talla, Bowton and the Ormistons—had risked lands and life?

Neither royal bedchambers nor the first hours of widowhood could command decent privacy in the crowded palace of Holyrood. Paris*—if we may believe him—slipped into Mary's bedroom. The

* Cf. next page.

black cloth was being hung on the walls, the windows were darkened and candles seemed to prolong the hideous night. A French lady of the court was serving up Mary's breakfast—a fresh egg—and, standing beside the bed within the curtain, Bothwell was conversing with the Queen.

Note.—It is fair to state that some of the details in the preceding narrative are drawn from the evidence of French Paris. This evidence is open to suspicion. He was examined in August 1569 at St Andrews. In his first deposition he accused Bothwell and others; it was only in his second deposition under terror of the rack that he accused Mary. His depositions are at times irreconcilable with one another, sometimes with the accepted dates of events. Immediately after his examination he was put to death.

CHAPTER XII

BOTHWELL'S ASSIZE

February 1567—May 1567

FOR months previously the minds of the most important people had been set on one object, to clear out of their road the useless, dissolute lad who, traversing their ambitions, had incurred their relentless hatred, but now that he was dead on their hands, at a stroke he had become an embarrassment, an appalling fact for which they were suddenly called on to account. Strong in united resolution they had forgotten to reckon with any outside opinion; indeed it hardly existed for them. They were the leaders of the country. Bothwell had his bands of moss-troopers ready to mount and ride at his whistle; Huntly held again all the power of the north, Argyle commanded the western clans, Lethington was the man of keenest wit and Sir James Balfour the freest from scruples of any in Scotland. A little apart from this compact company was Murray, watchful to see how the crimes of bolder men could be worked round to his advantage, and Morton enjoying in comparative irresponsibility the vengeance wreaked by other hands on the kinsman who had betrayed him. What chance had the conscience of any individual among them to assert itself before such a large consent in crime?

With steady countenance did Mary preside at a meeting of the Privy Council on the day following Darnley's death, where these men met the rest of the

nobility to concert means of discovering the murderers and bringing them to justice.

Meanwhile, Darnley's body lay in the outhouse guarded by a treacherous groom, Sandy Durham, and the people met in the street conjecturing, pointing and whispering names below their breath. Something the Privy Council had to affect to do. Clues there were many, but it was unsafe to follow up any of them. The sentinels were never called who could have identified the "Friends to the Earl of Bothwell" who passed in the darkness, nor the gate-keeper who had twice passed three armed men through the Netherbow Port. Nelson's evidence seems to have been stopped when it came to a question of the custody of the keys of the lower room. On Wednesday [12th] the Council arrived at the point of offering a reward of £2000 and a free pardon to anyone, whether party to the murder or not, who would give information.

Meanwhile a plausible story had to be prepared for the courts of Europe, a task for the subtle pen of Lethington. A letter which arrived on Monday morning from Mary's ambassador in Paris, the faithful Archbishop of Glasgow, gave warning of vague dangers threatening the Queen. Mary and Lethington were quick to take their cue from this hint. They answered that the warning was well-timed but had come too late; disaster had indeed occurred and only by the merest chance—the hypocrisy of the age sanctioned the recognition of a diviner agent—had the Queen escaped the death that was doubtless intended for her also.

Moretta, the Savoyard ambassador, who left Edinburgh thirty-six hours after the crime, brought the first news of it to London.

Countries and courts were isolated in those days. It would take days before light from the public opinion of other disinterested, more civilised societies could be flashed upon the moral darkness of the Scottish court. But in the meantime another public opinion, a stubborn, importunate opinion, familiar and particular with names, was making itself heard, secretly at first in dark anonymous utterances, but every week with increasing plainness and rising indignation.

On Friday, the 14th, late at night the king's body was interred at the vault at Holyrood with lack alike of royal pomp and decent piety. The next night a placard appeared on the door of the Tolbooth accusing the Earl of Bothwell, his friend Sir James Balfour, Mr David Chalmers and one, "black Mr John Spens" of the murder. It was the consciousness of this angry muttering, this instinct in the populace for tracking the scent of murder that made Edinburgh hateful beyond all enduring to Mary. After her first husband's death she had been content to sit out her forty days in darkened rooms, a model to all queens and wives, but before a week was over of her second widowhood the air of Edinburgh had become stifling to her.

Some miles from the town, on the shore of the Firth of Forth, lay Seton, the house of her faithful Setons, a place to which she had often gone for pleasure. It was a fresh, pleasant place, winds blew in from the sea, and whatever sunshine a Scotch February could boast flashed on blue waters and fair meadow lands. Here Mary spent most of the ensuing weeks, going backwards and forwards into Edinburgh, and here Bothwell, Lethington and Huntly were con-

stantly her visitors. Here they could ignore the voices that in the midnight streets of Edinburgh denounced the murderers by name, the placard which morning after morning kept up the excitement of the town, and forget that they had yet to face the suspicions and awkward questions of other governments.

Gossip of course was busy with the Queen's words and actions. Some spiteful tongue told old Lennox that one evening she had called for the tune "Well is me, since I am free." At Berwick tales reached Drury of shooting-matches at the butts and games of pall-mall, and of a dinner at Tranent which she and Bothwell had won from Huntly and Lord Seton at a shooting-match. Into the ghastly frivolity of these sports crashed like successive bombs uncompromising pronouncements from the courts of England and of France. Du Croc had been the first to bring the news to Paris, news received with such horror—genuine or affected—that the king's first impulse was to dissolve his Scottish guard. Spite had its share in Catherine's conviction that her daughter-in-law was at the bottom of the crime, but indeed the impression seems to have been general. Mary's ambassador could not withstand the prevailing conviction. He wrote with a noble and touching candour not concealing the fact that she "was wrongously calumniated to be the motive principal of the whole and all done by her command." He adjures her to take rigorous vengeance "otherwise it would be better that she had lost life and all."

For once Elisabeth—touched alike in her family pride and in her sense of the common dignity of princes—came out with generous frankness. To the Spanish ambassador she defended Mary's slowness in pursuing the murderers on the plea that she was

in terror of her nobles, the real criminals, but to Mary herself she wrote with admirable directness warning her how men interpreted her reluctance to investigate the crime, and urging her to show herself a noble princess and a loyal wife.

Even if she had wished to do so, all independent action was out of Mary's power. A common guilt delivers all the participants into the hands of the least scrupulous. In the weeks that followed the murder Bothwell was insatiable in annexing new powers and honours. Mary bestowed on him the fortresses of Dunbar and Blackness and the superiority of the Port of Leith. At the end of March, the heart of the kingdom, the Castle of Edinburgh, was taken out of the faithful hands of the Earl of Mar and bestowed upon a creature of Bothwell's. Bothwell had need of all these supports in this desperate game. Mary yielded everything as if anxious to propitiate him; a touch of fear, an eager anxiety to please and to attach already mingled with her passion. She had also her poor feminine delight in bestowing rich gifts on her lover; furs inherited from her dead mother, rare old altar cloths and church embroideries cut up to make scarves and doublets.

Meantime, where was the Earl of Murray, the hope of the godly? Apparently at St Andrews waiting on his sick wife. It was not till quite the end of February that he was expected in Edinburgh.

Early in March Killegrew was sent from Elisabeth on a formal visit of condolence to her cousin, and Mary had to hurry back from Seton to be in time to darken her rooms and light her candles. One evening he was Murray's guest at supper and the rest of the party consisted, oddly enough, of Lethington, Bothwell,

Huntly and Argyle. No one can believe that Murray was unaware of the suspicions that attached to all, and were loudly proclaimed in connection with one of the party. It was obviously not his cue to follow up investigations of the murder. That duty was left to the father of the dead man. Old Lennox was broken-down, discredited, and terribly solitary in a country where a man's safety depended on the number and kindness of armed kinsfolk. He was separated even from the capable, ambitious wife who had planned the fatal scheme of family aggrandisement. She, stricken mother and thwarted woman, was in the Tower impotently clamouring for revenge.

At first Lennox could get no definite answer from his daughter-in-law. He had urged that the men who were by name branded as murderers should be arrested. She asked, in answer, which names he meant; many were advertised on anonymous placards. When he urged an early investigation and trial of the murderers she answered smoothly that a Parliament was convened for April, and that she could not inconvenience her nobles by a double summons. Yet when he took courage and named in his letter those suspected of the murder—Bothwell, Chalmers, Balfour and other creatures of the earl's—she suddenly changed her policy, and on the 23rd of March announced to him that the trial was appointed for the ensuing week and invited him to be present at the same, if it suited his leisure and convenience. Throughout she wrote with suave indifference as of a matter which concerned no one but Lennox. In eager remonstrance he replied that the time allowed was far too short for him to collect evidence and summon witnesses. He recognised with sickening

certainty the hopelessness of his cause when such reasonable representations made but little alteration in the date. An Act of Council of March 28th appointed the trial of the Earl of Bothwell for April 12th. Oddly enough Bothwell's name stands among those who signed the Act.

He could count confidently on the forces at his command to defeat the ends of justice; but the general atmosphere of suspicion and the anonymous accusations tried his nerves and exasperated his temper. When men spoke to him his colour came and went, his hand played instinctively with the handle of his dagger; fifty armed men clattered after him when he rode up the High Street. Matters grew worse when the anonymous accusers coupled the Queen's name with his in their proclamations, and hinted not obscurely at a purposed divorce between him and his wife.

As yet the band of conspirators held together. Huntly was entirely "at Bothwell's devotion," partly from the ascendency of the stronger man's nature but more because Huntly's interests were bound up with those of his brother-in-law. As the price of the complete restitution of his lands and titles Huntly consented to the repudiation of his virtuous young sister by her husband. The wrong done to this innocent lady leaves a stain of dishonour on Mary's character darker than even her pitiless vengeance on Darnley.

The politic brain of Lethington was powerless to arrest the current of events; timidity kept him at Bothwell's side though he hated him and knew how fatally his clumsy selfishness would ruin the political position which Mary and himself had laboriously

gained through years of diplomacy. Murray may merely have dreaded Bothwell's ascendency. It is hardly fair to assert that he foresaw the ruin towards which Mary was tending, and calculated that time would work most profitably for him in his absence. Whatever his motives, he was suddenly and with no ostensible reason possessed by an urgent desire to visit France and left Edinburgh on April 9th.

Even in this time when all Mary's nobler nature was under eclipse, she retained at least one of her finer characteristics. Loyalty to fellow-sinners may not be high virtue; but it was fearfully lacking in the men who, a few months later, were only too thankful to make the one woman a scapegoat for their common sin. Mary at least was prepared to stand by her partners.

One of the minor conspirators complained of an accusation made against himself, and gave the writing first to Bothwell and then to Mary. Having read it she handed it to Huntly, and turning her back "gave ane thring with her shoulder, passed away and spake nothing." She had no words for one who for fear or favour hesitated to stick to his friends.

Lennox had written to Elisabeth to entreat her interference in procuring delay. With what friends and followers he could collect he was at Linlithgow the day before the trial. A mandate reached him there that he must come accompanied by no more than six followers. It was a sufficient indication of the justice he might expect to meet with. Fearing for his personal safety he merely sent a servant to lodge a remonstrance. Six thousand of Bothwell's men filled the town on the day of assize, he rode from Holyrood with a guard of two hundred hackbutters.

At daybreak a messenger had arrived, dusty and

sweating from Berwick, bearing Elisabeth's remonstrance, but was denied admittance though he waited hour after hour in the throng before the palace gates. Late in the morning Bothwell and Lethington coming out together spied him and took in his letter. Half an hour later Lethington informed him that the Queen was still asleep and might not be disturbed. Yet the fellow maintained that he saw the Queen and the Lady Lethington [Mary Fleming] at a window waving good-bye to Bothwell as he rode away.

The court was presided over by Argyle; the jury, all members of the nobility, had one and all sufficient reason for not offending Bothwell; in Lennox's absence no accusation was formally lodged, Bothwell pleaded not guilty and in the absence of all evidence to the contrary was unanimously acquitted; a more shameless farce never mocked the name of justice.

The only acts passed in the Parliament which sat for the ensuing five days are significant. Several acts restored to Huntly the forfeited possessions of his house; gifts of lands were ratified to Murray, Morton, Lethington, to Sir James Balfour's father-in-law and to Mr David Chalmers. An angry proclamation denounced the placards which continued daily to keep the city in excitement; concessions were made with unusual liberality to the Protestant establishment.

A delusive sense of triumph possessed Bothwell, but he dared not stop on the path he was treading; a moment's stay or hesitation would have set aflame the sullen jealousy smouldering in the hearts of his peers. He cowed them and kept them in hand by sheer audacity. On the evening of the 19th, the day the Parliament adjourned, he bade a number of noblemen to a supper at a tavern kept by one Ainslie.

We have no evidence as to the amount of drinking common among gentlemen on convivial occasions in those days. What follows would be at once more credible and more creditable if we could believe that on that evening all the most considerable of the Scottish nobility had been drunk. At a late hour in the evening Bothwell suddenly produced a paper or bond, which not only established his innocence of the king's murder but recommended him as a suitable husband for the widowed Queen, and to this he demanded their signatures. Had one man resisted, protested and threatened, the rest for shame's sake would have stood by him, but they were taken by surprise, flustered and demoralised, and when one or two had signed, the rest shamefacedly followed. Later, as an excuse, some of them asserted that they had become suddenly aware that bands of armed men filled the house and guarded the street. It is possible that Morton when he signed was playing a deeper game. He may have foreseen that Bothwell was madly forcing on the impossible and must inevitably fall dragging down the Queen in his ruin, a set of circumstances out of which the Scottish nobility could make their profit. Did Bothwell that evening add the Ainslie bond to certain other documents which he was afterwards believed to have kept in a silver Casket in careful custody at this time at Dunbar?

The biographer of Mary must be cautious in using material the authenticity of which has been matter of endless controversy and of minutest criticism that never yields a certain result; but some index we must have if we would even attempt to follow and understand the inner history of the Queen of Scots during the feverish months that lie between Glasgow and

Carberry Hill. The authenticity of the most important of the Casket documents, the long Glasgow letter, must be left in the hands of experts.* The ordinary reader after numberless perusals finds himself in the same dilemma, discrediting on the one hand the power of any forger to produce a composition so subtly characteristic, so dramatically convincing, so inimitably inconsecutive, and on the other unable to believe that any two accounts of a conversation could concur as exactly as does the account of Mary's and Darnley's conversation in the Letter with the account which Crawford swore had been given him by Darnley.

There is less difficulty in accepting the Casket Sonnets as genuine. They reveal a situation so strained and peculiar that it is difficult to imagine any forger subtle enough to have imagined it. If they are the genuine expression of Mary's passion, this is the drama—pitiful and humiliating but desperately sincere and consequently human—that they reveal. It is a bitter, relentless struggle between two women for the love of a man, a struggle in which all worldly advancement, all the glory and charm of the richer nature, all the reckless passion that stops at no sacrifice and proudly discounts dishonour are on the side of the one woman, and on the other, only the legal status of a wife, the dignity of unmerited wrong and the hold a gentle, passionless nature has at times on the reckless and headstrong. It was this hold that Mary felt she could not break. She herself withheld nothing ; honour, conscience, her high estate, the kindness of friends, the safety of her kingdom—she threw them all into the balance, and yet the

* The curious reader is referred to Mr Lang's "Mystery of Mary Stuart" for a full and masterly analysis of the Casket Letters.

tears of pale Lady Jean Bothwell outweighed them all.

But Bothwell, for the sake of his giddy and ill-calculated ambition, was as ready to sacrifice the heart of the woman he cared for as to accept the dishonour of the woman who loved him. By some persuasion, either by pressure from her brother, or by the sense of her helpless isolation, or perhaps by the quiescence of a naturally passive character, Lady Bothwell was brought to consent to the action for divorce. She went a step further in her submission and locked up in her charter chest the Papal Dispensation which had sanctioned her union with Bothwell, her far-away cousin. It was on the plea of consanguinity that the marriage was annulled. Even in that lawless age the production of the Dispensation would have stayed proceedings, but she had no heart for such a contest. Contemporary opinion confirms the situation we find in the Sonnets. Observers thought little of Bothwell's love for Mary, while the Queen's "inordinate love for Bothwell" was gossip on every tongue.

Kirkcaldy of Grange, a Protestant but above the average of the time for honesty, was as vigorous with his pen as with his sword. In a letter to Bedford on April 20th, the morning after Ainslie's tavern, he wrote: "She has said that she cares not to lose France, England and her own country for him and will go to the world's end in a white petticoat ere she leave him." There is a fine recklessness in the phrase that carries conviction.

On Monday the 21st Mary was at Stirling visiting her son, Darnley's child, who had so slight a hold on her affection. Meanwhile, Bothwell had gathered a body of his friends together, ostensibly to ride into

Liddesdale, but wild rumours were flying as to his intentions. On the very day when Mary was to ride from Linlithgow to Edinburgh an anonymous correspondent was foretelling her abduction to Cecil.

We seem at this point to pass from history into the pages of a conventional romance. A beautiful Queen is riding at high noon between two towered cities in the richest and most frequented district of her country. In her company are her most trusted counsellors Melville and Lethington, and Huntly a courtier and soldier. All at once, at a point where their road crosses a bridge, there is the flash of light on steel caps, the clatter of horses, confusion and loud orders to halt. Strangely, no resistance is offered. The leader of the hostile band seizes the Queen's bridle and she, the woman of highest courage and most imperious temper in the country, neither blazes out into anger nor cries aloud for help!

Mary's attendants were dismissed; Edinburgh was within a few miles, yet it would appear that none of the fugitives appealed to the burghers to attempt pursuit and rescue. Huntly, Lethington and Melville were carried off with the Queen. A follower of Bothwell, a Captain Blackadder, riding at Melville's bridle assured him that all was done with the Queen's consent.

Dunbar was as strong a place as any in Scotland, the grey North Sea swinging on the rocks on three sides of it. Inside it was probably as chill and unfurnished as on the February morning when Mary had found refuge there fleeing from Riccio's murderers. She had come without attendants, rough women from the garrison, hastily brought in, may have waited on her needs; her comings and goings were exposed to the curious eyes and ribald tongues of the men-at-arms.

The following day Melville was dismissed. It must soon have become clear to Lethington that Huntly was in the plot. He was himself in evil plight and physical peril unnerved Lethington. Huntly at one point openly threatened him, but fallen and infatuated as she might be, Mary had not ceased to be a queen; sweeping round on Huntly she threatened to deprive him of lands and life if a hair of Lethington's head were touched. Nay, she could defy Bothwell himself in defence of an unarmed man. By some means Lethington had received a message from some of the nobles assembled in Council relating to the rescue of the Queen. He was up in her chamber giving this message and probably urging on her a plan of escape.

Bothwell, suspicious of Lethington's influence, appeared stealthily in the open doorway of Mary's room. Lethington's back was towards him and Bothwell had raised his dagger to stab him when Mary slipped in between and drove Lethington into the ruelle between the bed and the wall—it was not the first time that slender body had thrust itself between an unarmed man and drawn daggers. It needed entreaties, alas! as well as authority to stem the brutal wrath of Bothwell.

It was not Lethington's policy to publish the fact that he owed life itself to his Queen; the incident was told years afterwards in an apology for William Maitland of Lethington written by his son, and he may have had the story from his mother who never to the end lost her love of her mistress.

Of the ten days that Mary and Bothwell spent at Dunbar in strange, unnatural isolation we have only two fragmentary bits of information which tell us

nothing. An Englishman from Berwick in passing by saw the pair walking together strongly guarded, Bothwell in gorgeous apparel. The second glimpse is politically more important. These ten days had given the rest of the nobility, Erskine, Athol, Glencairn, Morton and others, time to draw together and to realise that, Ainslie bond or no Ainslie bond, they would never endure that Bothwell should be promoted over their heads. This point was clear to them but nothing else. To them Mary wrote a formal letter saying that it was true that she had been "evil and strangely handled, but since, so well used as she had no cause to complain," willing them to quiet themselves. Meantime the Law Courts were at work to set Bothwell free to marry the Queen. On the third of May the Consistorial Court divorced Lady Bothwell on the ground of her husband's adultery with one of her maids, on the seventh Archbishop Hamilton dissolved the marriage on the ground of consanguinity, though a little more than a year previously he had himself signed the Dispensation for the marriage of the pair.

Of all the characters in this tragical history Lady Bothwell alone was to live and see good days. While Mary was expiating the sins and follies of her youth hour by hour through twenty heavy years, while Bothwell was fretting his soul into madness in his Danish prison, Jean Gordon, the honoured wife of the Earl of Sutherland, was superintending agricultural improvements and rearing up sons one of whom was to write a pious and affectionate eulogy of his mother. In the evening of her life she married her first love, Ogilvy of Boyne, Mary Beaton, his first wife, being dead.

CHAPTER XIII

CARBERRY HILL

15th June 1567

ON the 6th of May Mary and Bothwell re-emerged into the world, a world more changed and hostile than it was possible for Mary to conceive. At all times it is incredible to a young and beautiful woman that fate and men's minds can be relentless where she is in question: in the sixteenth century princes and potentates ignored the existence of any public opinion beyond that of courts and governments.

The first task that lay before Mary was confronting the courts of England and France with a plausible apology for her proposed marriage. She must have had perplexing and dispiriting visions of how Bothwell would fit into that delicate game of European politics in which she would inevitably have to resume her part. Could she imagine this swaggering Borderer an ally of Philip of Spain, or a welcome kinsman to the Cardinal of Lorraine? Could she imagine the new Pope, the devout Pius V., sending her his blessing [and subsidy] on her new marriage? She had never lost sight of her prospect of some day wearing the English crown, could she dream seriously of sharing it with Bothwell? Ambition had been the very breath of her life, diplomacy the art in which she excelled all women of her time, yet—if we are to believe the Sonnets—she had thought these not too dear a sacrifice to pay for love. But till it was

clear that the sacrifice was to be exacted she made a bold effort to piece the new life on to the old.

The last service Lethington rendered as Secretary was to draw up instructions for Robert Melville and the Bishop of Dunblane severally accredited to the courts of England and France. To represent the Earl of Bothwell as a suitable consort for a Queen of Scots and Dowager of France and at the same time to represent Mary as the innocent victim of his masterfulness was a *tour de force* beyond even Lethington's subtle pen. Nor were the curt, uneasy letters which Bothwell himself addressed to Elisabeth and to the French king calculated to improve his position with sovereigns certain to resent the sudden equality with themselves into which he had, momentarily, thrust himself.

Paris and London, however, were far off, there were more dangerous critics to be faced at home. It was a shabby court that Mary kept at Holyrood in those May days. Sir James Balfour held the Castle in Bothwell's interest, for Sir James' complete lack of principle inspired Bothwell with confidence, quite misplaced as it turned out. Huntly remained, but he was so bound up with the whole story that his presence counted for nothing. The faithful and uncritical among Mary's friends, the Flemings, Livingstons, Setons remained with her of course. Another friend, Lord Herries, was devoted enough to ride from his home in the Borders to throw himself at her feet and beg her to stop on the fatal course on which she had entered. Far from resenting her neglect of his advice, he was to stand by her in the darkest hour of her fortunes.

It may have been partly curiosity as well as

kindness that brought Sir James Melville to court in those days. A letter from a scandalised English adherent which he one day handed to the Queen, conveyed the warning he wished to give her. She read it and, turning angrily on Lethington, said that this was one of his devices. The Secretary, uneasy and alienated in a quasi-imprisonment, added nothing to Mary's dignity or security. Meantime at Stirling the nobles were drawing together, hostile and watchful. If they were aloof and sullen, the populace in the streets of Edinburgh were plain-spoken enough. No carriage in those days sheltered or concealed the great. Mary walking or riding up the steep High street was watched by curious eyes from stair-head and window. "God bless your Grace if you are saikless of the king's murder," cried the women after her in their loud, fierce Scots.

Twice before Mary had faced a conspiracy of nobles and scattered them by the force of her high spirit and capacity; she could trust to success and her own fascination to win back the fickle mob, but between these two lay the solid, unconsidered but determined and determining conscience of the country, the ministers and their following of decent burghers and country gentlemen.

Knox was still an exile in England, but the rebuke uttered in the pulpit of St Giles was more effective as coming from a modest and courageous man, his coadjutor John Craig. When constrained to publish the banns of marriage before the congregation of St Giles, Craig denounced the iniquity of such an union, and poured contumely on a nobility whose silence and flattery connived at such abomination. Not only from the security of the pulpit did this

simple minister put to shame the natural leaders of the people, alone before the Privy Council he accused Bothwell of murder, rape, adultery and collusion in the matter of the divorce. Bothwell muttered fiercely that he would have the minister hanged with a cord.

By two organs did public opinion find expression, the pulpit and placards. The latter were found nailed up on the very gates of Holyrood. On the eve of her marriage, the night of the 14th May, this line from Ovid was posted up :—

"Mense malas Maio nubere vulgus ait."

Early on that summer morning Mary, dressed in her "dule weed," was married to Bothwell in the Council Hall of Holyrood. Adam Bothwell, the renegade bishop of the Orkneys, performed the ceremony according to the Protestant rites, for so and only so would Bothwell have it. It was the last sacrifice Mary brought him and was probably the hardest strain on her conscience. The wedding was poorly attended. The French ambassador du Croc, like Throckmorton a true friend to Mary in good or evil fortune, refused to be present. Later in the day he visited the couple and was aware of a painful constraint between them. Mary excused it, saying that she had no wish to be cheerful; then, suddenly breaking down, she cried that she wished she were dead. Two days later Huntly and Melville standing outside her little closet heard the two voices raised in agitation and, finally, the Queen threatening passionately to kill herself.

The cause of their common unhappiness was neither the sting of remorse nor the sense of isolation—together they would have stifled conscience and defied

the world—but they found no comfort in one another. Bothwell held the cynical views of one who had met with signal success in his many and varied gallantries. A day or two before the marriage Sir James Melville found him at supper with Huntly and others and, on his invitation, joined the company. But the conversation took so licentious a turn that Melville—no Puritan but simply a decent gentleman—left the table in disgust and joined the Queen, "who," he adds, "was very glad to see me." To a man of Bothwell's calibre, the reckless generosity of Mary's love was merely a cause of suspicion; he knew, he said brutally, "qu'elle aimait son plaisir autant qu'un autre." So jealous was he that he would hardly suffer her to speak to man or woman. The bitterest pang of all was that Mary knew and all the world knew that he still corresponded with his wife at Crichton, writing to her once or twice a week, doing thus a strange, unnatural dishonour to both women.

Those who have felt and loved the charm and noble qualities of Mary—and in this almost all her biographers are among her servants—must be thankful for the rapid fatality that was overtaking her. Some great and signal tragedy was the only possible escape from such degradation.

At the beginning of June Lethington had slipped away from court and joined the lords at Stirling. Their policy had at last become clear to them. The outcry of foreign nations about the king's murder had touched them in their national honour; besides, pursuit of the murderers was safe, now that the scapegoat was isolated and discredited. Punishment of the murderers was one avowed object, another the protection of the little prince, a third the liberation of the

Queen from Bothwell, a legal fiction this last, to save them from the appearance of rebellion.

Things looked so menacing that on the usual pretence of establishing order on the Border, Mary sent out proclamations calling on the lieges to meet her and Bothwell at Melrose. Together they moved southward to Borthwick Castle. At the same moment Athol and Lethington entered Edinburgh, nor had the latter much trouble in persuading Sir James Balfour to betray the Castle into their hands.

Bothwell had already left Borthwick when, on the night of the 10th of June, it was surrounded by a hostile band calling loudly on him to surrender and shouting insults at the Queen. Nevertheless when they found that he was gone, to save appearances they rode back to Edinburgh. The next evening Mary in a page's dress slipped out of the castle and rode towards Dunbar. She was unattended, but a mile or two out was met by her husband. At three in the morning, with the summer dawn broadening over the sea, they, for the third time, reached that windy fortress, more tragically bound up with Mary's fortune than even Holyrood or Fotheringay.

Here probably some woman of the garrison supplied her with clothes, a short red petticoat, a velvet hat, and sleeves with points, the ordinary costume of an Edinburgh burgher wife. She was in such mean apparel when, on the morning of the 15th of June, she and Bothwell led out their army and occupied Carberry Hill.

Troops had been slow to come in. Besides the Queen's bodyguard of two hundred hackbutters they could count on little over 2500 men and most of these were tardy and uncertain. Lord Seton was

the only nobleman, and some Lothian lairds, neighbours of Bothwell's, the only men of position in their army.

With all his reckless courage Bothwell had not "that in his face which men would fain call Master: Authority." A few weeks before in the very hall at Holyrood the soldiers had mutinied for lack of pay and he, knowing no method but that of violence, had struck their leader and had barely escaped their vengeance. But if he could not keep an army together he could dispose it skilfully and lead it "gaillardement" as du Croc noticed when he rode up to make a last attempt at an accommodation between the two parties. His efforts were fruitless. The nobles would hear of two conditions only; either Mary must abandon Bothwell and return to them, in which case they would serve her on bended knees, or, if Bothwell would try the ordeal by combat, they were ready to supply half a dozen champions. The first condition Mary would not consider for a moment. She who never abandoned the meanest of her servants was not likely, at a crisis, to desert the man she loved.

She complained bitterly that the nobles had themselves cleared Bothwell of guilt and had recommended him to her as a husband. Bothwell had been marshalling his troops and rode up at this instant. He was willing he declared to accept the combat but the Queen interposed; it was her quarrel as well as his, she would not suffer him to try it alone.

Then Bothwell gaily bade du Croc stay to enjoy the spectacle of the battle, quoting a parallel from classical history. If the passage is not to be found, it proves at least that Bothwell's pulses were beating evenly. So gallant and assured was his bearing, so

skilful his disposition of his troops that du Croc left with the impression that he would have the better in the fight if only his men proved trustworthy. That was the fatal weakness. When the two armies stood opposite, the men on Mary's side refused to advance and insisted on negotiations being renewed. No conditions were offered except the renewed offer of single combat.

What can have been the reason of Mary's unwillingness to permit the combat? It is not unusual for high-spirited women, insensible to personal fear, to be tremulous for the far stronger men—husbands and sons—whom they love. But one cannot help thinking that superstition or conscience shook Mary's courage. The judgment of God was still believed to nerve the arm and sharpen the weapon against the guilty. Grange and Tulliebardine were rejected as not being Bothwell's equals. The same could not be urged against Lord Lindsay but the Queen would have none of it. He was her husband, he should fight with none of them.

By this it was late in the afternoon. Mary's troop had dwindled, the men slipping off in search of provender. Through long hours of waiting her fiery spirit had chafed against delay, now, sick at heart, she recognised that no fighting was possible that day. Then her one object was to secure a safe retreat for Bothwell.

From Grange she had learned that, for her husband, no terms were to be made. The noblemen were resolved to have his blood; for herself, if she would leave him, she should have all honour and obedience at their hands.

Meanwhile the hostile army disturbed at the absence of Grange, was seen to be advancing; it was time that Bothwell was away.

A certain French soldier of fortune, but a man of sensibility, has described their parting. "Wherefore she caused the duke* to depart with great pain and anguish, and with many long kisses they took farewell, and at last he asked her if she would keep the faith she had given him and she answered that she would. Thereupon she gave him her hand and he with a small company galloped off to Dunbar."

Yet before Bothwell left the Queen he had provided her with a weapon against her enemies. He assured her of the complicity in Darnley's murder, of Lethington, Balfour and Morton, and gave her some paper signed by Lethington. [This was not the Craigmillar document, the bond Bothwell had shown to Bowton before the murder; that document had been left in Balfour's keeping, and Randolph, writing long afterwards, declared that it had been destroyed by him and Lethington.]

All that hot June day from five in the morning till eight at night Mary had endured, foodless and shelterless, a prey to the cruelest emotions. Her mood was not one of lassitude or abasement, rather of fury and bitterness, when she met the hostile lords. "How is this, my Lord Morton," she cried tauntingly, "I am told that this is done to get justice against the king's murderers. I am told also that you are one of them." Seeing Lindsay, her anger overflowed "Ah, my Lord Lindsay, I will have your head for this."

Below the fine politic brain of the Guise, below the generous recklessness of the Stuart was a substratum of Tudor coarseness and violence which once or twice in her life-time came to the surface in furious

* Shortly before the marriage Mary had created Bothwell Duke of the Orkneys.

speech. All the way into Edinburgh she railed at her captors.

The brutal cry of the soldiers, "Burn the whore," was a sudden horrible revelation of public feeling moving her to angry tears till Grange silenced the speakers, striking with the flat of his sword. Flaunted in front of her, men carried a banner on which was depicted her murdered husband lying under a tree and her infant son invoking the vengence of Heaven on the murderers.

Up the crowded streets of Edinburgh they carried her, dishevelled, dusty, hardly able to sit her horse. Street windows and stair-heads were crowded by an excited populace crying vengeance on her, the women being especially impudent and vociferous. At a corner of the High Street where a steep wynd led down to the Cowgate stood a stately house where the Provost, Simon Preston of Craigmillar, had his lodging. There in a small room looking out on the High Street Mary spent the night.

Food she would have none nor was sleep possible in the narrow space she shared with her guards, mere rough soldiers. No woman was allowed to wait on the unfortunate Queen in her bitter need. It would seem that she contrived to write to Bothwell merely to assure him of her love and faith, but the paltry knave to whom she entrusted the letter handed it to the lords.

Early in the morning dishevelled and with disordered garments she leaned from her window, commanding, entreating the passers-by to rescue her. She saw Lethington below in the street and called to him to come up. He crushed his hat further on his head and would have passed on, but feeling among the

mob was divided and running high and for very shame's sake he went up.

Mary's bitterest grievance was still that they had parted her from her husband. Either to cure her infatuation or to relieve spiteful feelings of his own, Lethington said the cruelest thing he could think of; Bothwell was not worth her regretting, he had always preferred his own wife to her, he had assured Lady Bothwell of it in letter after letter. A week earlier the words would have cut to the quick; now the fact of separation had swept jealousy and suspicion aside. Let them place her, she cried, on a ship with Bothwell to drift at the winds' will. On this point she was clearly impracticable, but on others she was clear-headed and dangerously aware of the points she held in her hand.

Later in the day Lethington was with her again. She declared that she was willing to join in prosecuting the murderers, and told him plainly that she had seen his signature and knew from Bothwell of Morton's and Balfour's complicity.

It was clear defiance. Each knew enough to hang the other. At first Lethington was inclined to accept it as such, but prudence and compromise were of the essence of the man. He left the Queen with some vague promise of serving her at a future time. It was clearly for his interest and Morton's that she should be moved out of the way. Besides the mob had to be reckoned with, it might rise at any moment either to wreak vengeance on Mary or to rescue her.

At eight in the evening the lords conducted her to Holyrood; she, poor soul, believed that they meant to reinstate her there. A body of 300 hack-

butters guarded her down the street, Morton and Athol walked on either side of her.

The only softening touch is supplied by the presence of two faithful Maries, Mary Livingston—now Mary Sempill—and Mary Seton. By their kind care the Queen now wore a bedgown of shot silk. After supper, of which she again refused to partake, it was announced to her that she must mount and ride that very night, must cross the Firth and make no stay till she reached the castle of Loch Leven. From Leith onwards she was guarded by Lord Lindsay and Lord Ruthven.

She knew that Huntly and the Hamiltons, though they had failed to appear at Carberry, still held the field. She had a wild hope that a rescue might be attempted and tried, during the long night ride, to slacken the pace, pleading weariness, but relentlessly her companions spurred on the tired jades that carried them.

Early on the morning of Tuesday, June 17th, she reached the island-castle of Loch Leven in a half fainting condition. Nature was merciful and for a fortnight her physical condition dulled her mental misery.

CHAPTER XIV

LOCH LEVEN

June 1567—May 1568

LIFE with its burden of remembrance and fear, of thwarted passion and unquenchable vitality, came back rapidly to Mary. She had been isolated during the days of her sickness with two waiting women and her apothecary. Now she found herself in the middle of a crowded household, boxed up in narrow buildings on a small island. Day after day she was to look out across the placid grey lake at her feet, to rounded lines of green hills. About a mile across the water a huddled group of low roofed cottages represented the only point from which help or excitement or new terrors could reach her in her island prison.

The place was remote, cut off from the larger world, yet in itself afforded neither solitude nor privacy. But at first the crowded life in the castle, the eyes that looked at her with curiosity, hostility or furtive sympathy, the figures that passed her on the narrow stair or crossed the court below her windows, were but moving shadows to the dulled perceptions of the Queen. Two instincts absorbed all her powers of feeling and of willing; a haunting terror of what might be done to her and determination to resist all demands to give up her husband. At times she looked for nothing but death. Once seeing a page below her window she called out to him to bid her friends pray God for her soul for there was little hope for her body. Yet no

LOCH LEVEN CASTLE

(Thomas de Leu)

CHARLES IX, KING OF FRANCE

fear shook her constancy. Between her and Bothwell at this time there was a bond which even a less loyal and affectionate woman could not have disregarded. She believed that she carried Bothwell's unborn child below her heart. When, after the agitation of the abdication, that prospect was swept away, her mind recovered its spring and all her energies bent themselves to reconstituting her life and recovering liberty and position.

One of the sorest troubles of her captivity—and through the long years in England it was the same—was that she was cut off from all news of the outer world except such things as her gaolers chose to communicate, and these were always disheartening or alarming.

Day after day she must have dreaded to hear that Bothwell was in the hands of his enemies. With her unconquerable—and inexperienced—hopefulness she counted up the friends on whose help she could depend. There was Elisabeth, the sister-queen, with whom she had exchanged false, fervid vows of fidelity; there was the King of France with whom she had been brought up; surely also there was the whole chivalry of that French court where she had been admired and loved; there was the King of Spain on whom her religion gave her a claim; and, coming nearer home, there was her brother the Earl of Murray, to whose return she looked forward with ill-founded hopes of comfort and protection.

Lady Murray certainly visited her in the first weeks of her captivity. The two ladies met in tears and parted with sorrow from one another. We know little of Agnes Keith, Lady Murray, save the "long love" she had borne her husband before marriage

and the ugly greed with which she, later, clung to Mary's jewels when these passed into her charge, but the tears she shed with the unhappy Queen may be counted to her for righteousness.

Could Mary have known all that was passing in the outer world it would have added nothing to her peace. Two days after she had been spirited off to Loch Leven fortune brought a windfall to the Lords which strengthened their hands materially.

Word came to Morton and Lethington as they sat at dinner that three of Bothwell's personal servants had passed into the Castle. At once a search was made for them, and by the treachery of a certain "good fellow," one of them, George Dalgleish, was run to earth in a house in the Potterrow. The papers he had in his possession, infeftments and the like, served no purpose of the finders, but when the poor wretch was brought face to face with the rack, he collapsed entirely, and leading Mr Archibald Douglas —Morton's Jackal—to his lodgings, drew from under the seat of the bed a silver box. This was delivered into Morton's hands and next morning opened in the presence of Athol, Mar, Glencairn, Home, Sempill, Sanquhar, the Laird of Tulliebardine and Lethington. The contents were said to have been "sighted" by those present.

Whether the letters that have come down to us are the same as were then sighted, or whether these were garbled, changed and added to, is not the question here. It is certain that "some testimony in her own handwriting" of her complicity in the king's murder was used by the Lords as a constraining argument in compelling Mary's abdication. They kept the letters under lock and key and the dubious

custody of Morton, but sent the report of them or actual copies of them to ruin what reputation Mary might still have at the courts of France and England.

Elisabeth, whatever her private opinion may have been, professed—and it is to her honour—to the Spanish ambassador her disbelief in the discovery of compromising letters. Indeed at this juncture Elisabeth was Mary's only friend. Mary had been faithless to her church, and the Pope, the fervent Pius V., would have nothing more to do with her "unless in time to come he should see better signs of her life and religion than he had witnessed in the past."

At the court of France, where Mary might have looked for sympathy, there was total indifference if not a spice of malicious satisfaction in her downfall. Martigues alone, the gallant Martigues who had starved inside Leith in 1561, the husband of an early friend of Mary, offered to restore her to freedom and power if the king would grant him three thousand arquebusiers, but Catherine remarked sourly that they had enough irons in the fire. But up to a certain point the English Queen was prepared to interfere. The sanctity of kingship had been outraged in a sister sovereign, a precedent that made Elisabeth furious. She was accustomed to look upon the Scottish nobility as men at her devotion, she thought that she had only to scold them for their rebellion and dictate the terms on which they should be reconciled to their sovereign. At the same time she wrote severe but protecting letters to her cousin. It was her plan, that Mary, humble and grateful, should owe everything to her magnanimous rival.

It is an argument of her good faith that Elisabeth

chose as her envoy Sir Nicholas Throckmorton. Throckmorton is always a welcome figure in the story of Mary, for in the company of her Scottish nobles one loses all recollection of what constitutes a man of the world and a man of honour. For six weeks prudently and courageously, though with infinite distaste for the men he had to deal with, he worked in Mary's interest.

At the end, if he effected nothing towards her restoration, he was soberly convinced that it had been his persistent efforts alone that had saved her life.

The nobles resolutely refused to grant him access to Mary, yet he managed to have a jewel conveyed to her, a token of good faith from Elisabeth.

They covered their delay in negotiating with him with endless excuses. Once it was a fast and "they must first seek the matters of God and take counsel of Him who could direct them" before they could attend to business. Lethington used to come confidentially to Throckmorton's lodgings, and with a great show of candour gave him clearly to understand that the nobles had once and again found such cold comfort at Elisabeth's hands that they were slow to trust her. France, on the other hand, was eager for the old alliance and would make no troublesome conditions about the Queen.

It was brought home to Throckmorton that if Elisabeth insisted too hotly on Mary's liberation it would throw Scotland into the arms of France, and would be the signal for Mary's death. "In case you do, on the Queen's behalf your mistress, press this company to enlarge the Queen my sovereign and to suffer you to go to her . . . I assure you, you will put the Queen my mistress in great jeopardy of her life."

Behind the nobles, urging them on and really dictating the policy, was a stubborn and vociferous public opinion. "The women be most furious and impudent and yet the men be mad enough," Throckmorton wrote. The general excitement even threatened his own life. He was distinctly preached against from the pulpit. The ministers, especially Knox and Craig, were very austere. "They preached hot cannons against her," is Throckmorton's vivid phrase.

Clear-cut and rigorous fell their verdict that their Queen "hath no more liberty nor privilege to commit murder or adultery than any other private person, either by God's laws or the laws of the realm." They threatened God's judgment on the country if the guilty Queen were not brought to punishment. There was a hideous old Scottish law which condemned a wife guilty of compassing her husband's death to be burnt alive. Nor was this law a dead letter. That very autumn in Edinburgh a certain Hamilton was put to death for taking his brother's life, but his sister-in-law, the partner of his passion and his sin, suffered death by fire. Possibly, even in the case of the Queen, the preachers, with an angry populace behind them, might have clamoured for the extreme penalty.

But a Council on which sat Morton, Balfour and Lethington could not face a public trial. If they had testimony in her own hand against her, she had proof that meant hanging for them. Their wisest course was so to work upon her fears as to force her to abdicate.

In the first weeks she had in her terror made various offers. She would retire to France and enter a convent or live with her grandmother the old Duchess of Guise, she would resign the government to Murray

or to old Chatelherault. With forlorn dignity she entreated her nobles, if they would not treat her as their Queen, to use her at least as the daughter of the king whom many of them remembered and the mother of their prince. She ends with a pathetic request that an embroiderer may be sent to her. She had the feminine instinct to keep crowding fears and torturing memories at bay by the small familiar art of the needle. The altar cloth she worked at Loch Leven is still in preservation. The velvet is brittle and the silk and gold thread tarnished, but still we can touch the *fleurs-de-lis* and angels of her shaping. In one of her letters to Sir Robert Melville at this anxious time she asks him to send her a weight of crimson silk and silver thread.

Dejected and restless as she might be, "the enchantment whereby men are bewitched" was inseparable from Mary and independent of any effort of hers. When Lord Ruthven, presuming on her helplessness and forgetting his own place of trust about her person, dared to speak to her of love, she treated it as an insult and complained to the lady of the castle.

Lord Ruthven was removed; yet it was he who, with Lord Lindsay and Sir Robert Melville, was sent on the 24th of July to extort her consent to the abdication. Melville contrived to secure a private interview with the Queen, before the arrival of his colleagues, in her bedchamber where she was lying sick. His advice was honest and friendly. Let her sign the deed of abdication for the sake of peace; being extorted under compulsion such consent need not bind her afterwards.

That strange, variable creature Lethington had

sent her a token, an enamel representing a mouse freeing a lion from the toils with this inscription, "A chi basta l'anima non mancano le forze." One wonders how far the steady affection of Mary Fleming deflected the policy of her restless husband. Her brother-in-law Athol and the Laird of Tulliebardine also sent tokens.

To the politic arguments of Melville Mary would not yield, but when Lindsay in a "boisting" humour threatened to have her dragged out of bed and carried away from those who, from gaolers, suddenly appeared to her as protectors, she hastily consented, and, sick and dispirited, signed the deed in the presence of two notaries.

Five days later the baby prince was crowned at Stirling. With gratuitous brutality the Laird of Loch Leven allowed his servants to celebrate the event with bonfires and acclamation. When Mary learned the cause of the rejoicings she laid her head on the table and wept aloud calling on God to avenge her cause.

The time was now ripe for the return of the Earl of Murray. The news of his sister's defeat and captivity had reached him at the end of June in France. He may have persuaded himself that he was shocked and distressed at her downfall. By his servant, Nicholas Elphinston, he sent her a letter. Elphinston, in an interview with Elisabeth, conveyed the impression that his master was sending comfortable messages to his sister. Notwithstanding this, Elisabeth received Murray with reproaches when, on his way north, he stopped at the English court. He apologetically assured her that he would do his best for his own Queen.

Few writers have had a finer mastery of the difficult art of reporting conversations than the Spanish ambassador de Silva; no diplomatist had ever more consummate skill in making men involuntarily turn themselves inside out. He took Murray's measure to a nicety. By his tone and by the difficulties he raised, de Silva recognised that, though the Scotsman kept returning to his desire to help the Queen, it was not altogether his intention. Had de Silva spoken of Mary as guilty, Murray would have posed as her apologist. The acute Spaniard did the reverse. He gave Murray the gratifying assurance that Mary's confessor, when he visited him on his way back to France, had emphatically asserted her innocence of all knowledge of the murder. This was too much for Murray. He burst out in accusation of his sister and in deep confidence gave de Silva curious and particular details of a letter from Mary to Bothwell which a friend of his had seen in Scotland. As reported, this letter differs essentially from the famous Glasgow letter, nor was it ever produced in evidence. It contained direct proposals for the poisoning of Darnley and of Lady Bothwell, and alluded to a long-matured plan for an explosion with gunpowder. Murray may have spoken excitedly and from a half-remembered impression, but that would have been unlike his usual prudent procedure. He may have been deceived by a forged letter afterwards rejected as too crude. De Silva at the end of the interview was satisfied that Murray would do little for Mary and much for himself.

In spite of her knowledge of him and his ways it took a final experience to convince Mary that, under her brother's cold manner and affectation of blunt

honesty, there was neither pity nor warmth of heart. She had counted anxiously on his return without realising what she expected from him. He arrived in Edinburgh on the 11th of August, and though Throckmorton thought him sincere and full of commiseration for his sister, he saw that his mind was mainly occupied with the regency, and was already calculating with what show of decent reluctance he could allow it to be forced on him. He belonged to that large class of good people who cannot gratify their heart's desire without putting a colour of duty upon it.

But for Throckmorton's persistence he would have been put off going to see his sister by the unwillingness of the Lords to countenance his visit. When finally he arrived at Loch Leven, Athol and Morton were in his company. But Mary, with a burst of weeping, led him apart and for two hours they talked till supper-time, Murray torturing his sister by his reserve and ambiguity.

In all her humiliation she never forgot that she was a Queen, and at supper reminded him that he had not been too proud to hold the napkin for her. It was Murray himself who described to Throckmorton the poignant and painful scene that followed,—Murray, the confederate of Darnley's murderers, Morton, Lethington and Balfour!

"After supper, every one being retired, they conferred together till one of the clock after midnight . . . and the said earl did plainly and without disguising, discover unto the Queen all his opinion of her misgovernment and laid before her all such disorders as either might touch her conscience, her honour or surety. I do hear that he behaved himself rather

like a ghostly father unto her than like a counsellor. Sometimes the Queen wept bitterly, sometimes she acknowledged her unadvisedness. . . . Some things she did confess plainly—(it is Murray's account of course)—some things she did excuse, some she did extenuate. In conclusion the Earl of Murray left her that night in hope of nothing but God's mercy, willing her to seek that as her chiefest refuge."

It gives one a shiver to think of the poor soul creeping away to bed and lying wide-eyed and horror-stricken with waking visions of relentless judges and feverish, broken dreams of the "fiery death."

And Murray? He who would venture a glimpse into that dark and subtle mind would need to be deeply versed in the human heart, its instinct of self-deception, its confused interpretation of the voice of conscience, its ignorance of the passions and desires that are impelling it along its course.

Next morning Mary sent for him betimes, and now in the clear daylight he appealed less to her fears. Her life he thought he might save; her honour he would try to preserve; but for her freedom, she must not hope for it, "nor was it good for her to have it."

After the terrors of the night these meagre promises seemed a new gift of life, of the life which ran so full and strong in the veins of this beautiful woman of five and twenty. She took her brother in her arms and kissed him, and begged him to accept the regency. Murray demurred at first, he demurred also to take the charge of her jewels, but finally he consented to both. [The jewels provided the sinews of war against Mary's party after the battle of Langside.]

At parting, Mary kissed him again with a fresh burst of tears, but afterwards when the immediate terror was removed the remembrance of his reproaches and injurious language "cut the thread of love and credit betwixt the Queen and him for ever."

In the weeks that followed Mary came to herself again. The overmastering infatuation for Bothwell passed away like an evil dream.

She had held to him at the imminent risk of her own life, she had insisted that he should be treated no worse than she herself. But while she had dared everything he had lacked audacity as well as resource. He had skulked in the north with Huntly until the latter, realising that the game was up, wearied of his guest. A kinsman of Bothwell, a wicked old Bishop of Moray, well over eighty, held the Castle of Spynie, and thither Bothwell and his outlawed "lambs" drew to a hold. The illegitimate sons of this bishop, lawless Hepburns themselves, resented the intrusion and bribed an English prisoner to murder Bothwell, but, like a wolf at bay, he turned on his kinsmen, slew one and turned the others out of doors. But these experiences had convinced him that life and livelihood were no longer to be found for him in Scotland, and so he sailed with his band to take possession of his Dukedom of the Orkneys. They seized two ships from a Bremen trader in the island and planned to live as pirates on the high seas. In September, Grange, the only man among the Confederates whose quarrel was with Bothwell rather than with Mary, pursued Bothwell and almost took him in a narrow strait between the islands, but his ship ran aground and Bothwell escaped to Denmark. There, being shipwrecked, he was taken prisoner by the king, languished in prison,

growing gradually mad from inactivity and vacuity and so passes miserably out of the story.

Practically he had passed out of Mary's life in the autumn of 1567 at Loch Leven. After all the shattering experiences of the last twelve months, Mary found that she had both vitality enough to live again and courage to reconstruct her broken life.

Though she was cut off from confession and the consolations of religion, in spirit she reconciled herself with the Church, that great, human-hearted, hospitable Church which takes the sins of the faithful into her own responsibility and in her many mansions has room for saint and sinner alike. The good old Archbishop of Glasgow in Paris had much consolation in learning that "she had begun to serve God better, with more devotion and greater diligence than she had been wont to do for some time previously." The news was gladly received by those who loved her and loved the Church. In Madrid, her old friend Madame Elisabeth assured the Nuncio that "she had acknowledged her fault and become quite Catholic and spiritual." She used the little room above her own as her oratory: it was the apothecary's, and the only corner where she could secure privacy.

For within the narrow castle buildings there was crowded life, and where there were men and women with hearts to be won and imaginations to be dazzled, there Mary had still a kingdom.

As early as October the Lords were disconcerted, because they learned that she had "won the favour and goodwill of all the household, as *well women as men*," a curious state of things if she were the mere wanton some of them declared her to be. But it was never otherwise with this strangely winning and

lovable woman, and surely it is by the qualities of the heart that a woman appeals to other women. The deeply injured old Lady Huntly had stood by Mary at the time of the Riccio murder. The Lady of Loch Leven, Janet Erskine, her father's old true love, had little reason to love Mary of Guise's daughter, yet by the end of September among those "who were drawn from their former ill-will and envy to pity," the most important was the Regent's mother. Perhaps the sorrows of the beautiful, younger woman touched a heart that was warm and human, if we may judge by the one or two letters of the lady's that are still extant. Perhaps there were tricks of eyebrow and of voice in James' daughter that brought back memories of youth and all its love, its gladness and its grieving.

In spite of the narrow dwelling and her inactive life, Mary's health was good, her graciousness and high spirit invincible. It was even reported that she was "waxing fat and making show of mirth." Once or twice she seems to have gone out fishing in a boat with the Laird. He, it is evident, never came under her spell, nor Robert the next brother, but two young girls, the Laird's daughter and niece, who actually shared the Queen's room with her, had for the beautiful and mysterious stranger that admiring devotion which is the romance of early girlhood. In the Laird's third brother George, "bonnie Geordie" as he was nicknamed, Mary was to find a servant, as ardent and chivalrous as any hero in the long romances she loved to read.

Had she found in any of them a more romantic situation than this, of a beautiful queen imprisoned in an island-castle, and a passionate, silent young man

in a very "fantasy of love" watching her fair, white fingers, working with crimson silk and silver thread; a slave to her graciousness and fitful mirth, humble and reverent before her wrongs and sorrows, above all, ardent to effect something for her service? The long, slow, fire-lit evenings of a Scottish winter when wild geese flew screaming overhead and the wind whistled round the Tower, the endless dulness of December days when the mist lay low on the lake, hardly hung heavily on her hands when within she was busy securing all the romantic hearts in the castle. A mixed group they were. George Douglas, a page, Willie Douglas (only fourteen years old but full of sense and spirit), the two young girls, a soft-hearted laundress from the mainland, and the noble Lady herself.

In the meantime the Scottish nobility were busy securing their own immunity should inquisition be made into the murder. In October Drury wrote, "The writings which comprehend the names and consents of the chiefs for the murdering of the king are turned into ashes, the same not unknown to the Queen, and the same which concerns her part kept to be shown." In a Parliament held in December, all the action of the nobles was approved on the plea that "all was in the Queen's default; diverse, her privy letters, written wholly with her own hand and sent to James, Earl of Bothwell, proving that she was privy, art and part, and of the actual device and deed of the murder of the king."

On January 3rd, three of Bothwell's followers, Dalgleish, Hay of Talla, and Hepburn of Bowton were "justified." Confessions had been wrung from all three incriminating the Queen. In Bowton's con-

fession the account of the Craigmillar Bond shown to him by Bothwell was carefully burned and never appeared at the examination at Westminster. The fear of the rack had influenced Talla's confession, but in the hopeless, fearless freedom of the scaffold he openly denounced Huntly, Argyle, Lethington and Balfour as the contrivers of the murder. So great was the popular indignation, that the four men named suddenly left Edinburgh.

Murray was finding the Regency difficult beyond his expectations. He had, as Throckmorton recognised, intended to rule the country less like a modern statesman "than as one who had led Israel," to establish the reign of righteousness after the fashion of Knox. To do this in alliance with men like Morton, Lethington and Balfour involved a constant compromise which became intolerably irksome. If Mary were at liberty but consenting to his Regency it would make him independent of those allies.

In August, he had left her in hope of nothing but God's mercy; in the following March "he was making fair weather towards her," and had a startling proposition to make. It is incredible that he ever named Morton to her as a possible husband, but he certainly proposed that she should marry Lord Methven, a blameless young nobleman and a Stuart. To his amazement Mary suggested his own brother George as a possible husband. The old Lady may have lent herself to this wild scheme; Mary complained to her of Murray's lack of kindness to his brother. She can hardly have been serious, at any-rate not deliberate, but she would have bought liberty at any price, and in a situation as troubled

as hers, excitement, sensibility, gratitude and sheer desperation will play riot in judgment and emotions.

By Murray's orders young George was banished from the island, but continued to be active as Mary's agent among the scattered elements of her party.

What party had she to trust to? To *trust* to, none; for all were ready to sell her at a moment's notice if it served their interest. The Hamiltons had held aloof from the Regent and his confederates. Tulliebardine assured Throckmorton that, in the anxious days of July and August, they would have joined the Confederate Lords if they had put the Queen to death, and recognised their rights. With a bastard Stuart all powerful as Regent, their tepid loyalty had shifted back to the Queen. The unalterably faithful Setons, Flemings, Livingstons, were ready to rise at the first signal, Lord Herries was restless in the south, Argyle and Huntly tentatively reconciled to the government, might still be expected to declare for the Queen if occasion offered.

"The Queen's liberty by favour, stealth or force, is shortly to be looked for," Drury wrote at the end of March.

Early in April an attempt to escape almost succeeded. A laundress from Kinross had been rowed to the island with her basket of clean linen. On the return journey the good woman sat quite silent with her hood drawn low over her face. Something in her bearing roused the suspicion of one of the boatmen who tried to peer below the hood. Instinctively the laundress raised her hands to shield her face. Alas! for the *longue et grêsle et délicate main* that Ronsard had kissed and sung! So fair a hand belonged to one woman only in Scotland. In

spite of tears and entreaties the boatmen put back to the island but, to their honour, did not betray her.

When on the 2nd of May a second attempt was successful, it was owing to the pluck and ingenuity of little Willie Douglas.

His preparations were made with a secrecy and completeness unusual in a conspirator of fourteen. He had previously scuttled all the boats but one. Mary, in cloak and muffler, awaited the signal in an upper room. The Laird was at supper, the dusk was gradually deepening in the hall. All the house keys lay beside him on the table; the page while serving his master, deftly dropped a napkin over them and noiselessly swept them off the table. The old Lady we are told "was of the counsel" and probably kept her son engaged while two silent cloaked figures, moving swiftly, followed the eager boy to the landing-place. He had the coolness to lock each door as they passed out, and, once in the boat, dropped the keys into the lake.

Anxious friends were on the watch in the little village of Kinross. John Beaton, faithful like all his race, a brother of the Archbishop in Paris, the Laird of Riccarton, a friend of Bothwell, and the devoted George himself. He had collected all the Laird's horses. To avoid delay one had been provided with a side saddle for Mary, but she refused to start till she had seen the boy Willie mounted also. Four miles further they met Lord Seton, and, before they reached the north shore of the Firth, Lord Claude Hamilton and a small force. It was a wild, exhilaratting ride with the sweet chill spring wind in her face and liberty and hope in every throb of her heart. That night they crossed the Firth and never halted

till they reached Lord Seton's house at Niddry. Even then they rested but an hour or two. Mary despatched Beaton with despatches to the courts of France and England and secret messages to the Spanish ambassador, while Riccarton rode to Dunbar to try and secure the fortress for the Queen. Then to horse again and across Scotland to Hamilton, where immediately an astonishing number of noblemen flocked to join her. Lord Herries in his memoir may well say, "The Queen, an active lady, was herself the chief means of her escape!"

Unfortunately it needed more than a woman's ardour and active brain to turn escape into victory. Mary's party lacked neither numbers nor credit nor devotion, but they were destitute of brains. The faithful Catholic following, Setons, Livingstons, Flemings, the Protestant Herries, had the same qualities which made later Jacobitism the most loyal and luckless of parties. The Hamiltons were an undistinguished group, the only one among them of any ability, the bastard Archbishop, carried weight with no one from lack of disinterestedness. Mary had never had confidential relations with their house and had small grounds to trust them, but friendships grow rapidly in dire straits. In her proclamations she calls "the good Duke of Chatelherault" her dearest father.

Murray was at Glasgow when he heard of his sister's escape and promptly summoned the lieges to defend the young king's government. Meantime at Hamilton a counter proclamation was being concocted, the most singular piece of unrestrained vituperation ever woman set her hand to.

This is no carefully worded appeal calculated

prudently to excite sympathy with Mary's wrongs and indignation against her enemies; it is rather the gusty outbreak of a woman heedless of everything but the relief of crying aloud in the ears of the world her hate and intolerable sense of wrong.

It is mere violence when she writes of her enemies as "Hell-hounds," "bloody tyrants without souls or fear of God," "mansworn ethnics," but there is a personal sting when she writes of Murray. He had been at the pains of bringing home her sins to her; here she recklessly lays all the troubles of her reign at his door. The downfall of the House of Huntly, the estrangement between herself and Darnley, the murder, even the ravishment by Bothwell, are traced to the suggestion of the "spurious bastard—although named our brother—whom we promovit from a religious monk to earl and lord." It is improbable that this writing was published, certainly another and a far more moderate proclamation was current.

The proper policy for Mary was to make for the fortress of Dumbarton and there wait till her party should solidify at home and help come from abroad. Between Hamilton and Dunbar lay Glasgow where Murray had collected his forces. His army was smaller than the mixed feudal band that held for Mary, but he had artillery and he had knowledge of warfare. Moreover Kirkcaldy of Grange, the best soldier in Scotland, commanded his troops.

On the 13th of May the two armies met at Langside. From Cathcart Knowe Mary watched the battle close at hand. She heard the artillery duel that opened the struggle, she may have seen the fierce encounter on the hill-top and the disordered down rush of the Hamiltons as Kirkcaldy drove them back

on the main body. Argyle who was leading Mary's forces collapsed in an unexplained fashion. There is no reason to suspect him of treachery, but he had either some sort of fit or a sudden failure of nerve at the critical moment.

When Mary knew that the day was lost, she, for the first and last time in her life, gave way to panic. She could not face the prospects of fresh interviews with Murray. Behind him she saw prison gates closing in again upon her and judgment and the "fiery death"; she turned her horse and fled precipitately. For sixty miles she rode with hardly a break, southward into Lord Herries' country. Sour milk and oatmeal at a peasant's door, a few hours of sleep on a clay floor were all the refreshment she allowed herself till they reached the northern shore of the Solway.

Some miles inland, in a little valley, far withdrawn, lay the Abbey of Dundrennan, as solitary a home of peace as the Monastery on the Lake of Monteith that had sheltered her childhood. Thither, startling the simple inmates with the noise and terrors of the outer world, rushed the fugitives on their wearied horses, but only for a moment's breathing space.

Whither could Mary turn? Lord Herries undertook to keep her in safety till her friends could gather to a head or her enemies fall out with one another. After a week or two she might retire on Dumbarton or take ship for France.

France was far off, her ties to her old friends had slackened. She could count on no welcome from the Cardinal if her presence embarrassed his position, her mother-in-law would look sourly on a banished suppliant of tarnished reputation. Such a contrast with her former self was more than she could face.

On the other hand, in spite of all experience, Mary again and again fell into the delusion that she could trade either upon Elisabeth's generosity or her fears. And indeed the sympathy which Elisabeth had gone out of her way to lavish on Mary during her captivity justified the most sanguine views. At this very time a messenger from the English Queen was on his way to congratulate Mary on her escape.

England was near, visible across the Solway, and seemed to offer an asylum from the nightmare of recapture by Murray. She wrote to her cousin from Dundrennan, but too feverish to rest, refused to wait for an answer and insisted on embarking on the following day for England. She sailed in a fisherman's boat accompanied by Herries, George Douglas and some sixteen more of her friends.

In one of her sentimental moods Elisabeth, at a later time, compared Mary to a bird which, to escape the pursuit of the hawk, had fled to her feet for protection. A wild bird beating its wings against the bars of a pitiless cage is hardly a happy symbol of royal protection. Could Mary have foreseen the slow sap of years of captivity, and at the end the very fate from which she was fleeing, how thankfully would she have turned back to try with a small faithful following the last extremity of battle!

CHAPTER XV

THE CONFERENCE AT YORK

June 1568—January 1569

NO sins nor crimes of which we may be guilty come home to roost so rapidly and inevitably as our insincere sympathies, our cheap offers of benevolence. Elisabeth had sent a jewel to Mary at Loch Leven as a pledge of her faithful friendship, she had committed herself to expressions of warm sympathy for a sister sovereign outraged by her subjects. Now, on the top of news from Scotland of the defeat and flight of the Queen, came an urgent, confident letter from Mary herself dated Dundrennan Abbey, followed next day by another written from Workington in Cumberland. She wrote without misgiving as to one already engaged on her side. She brings a string of accusations against her enemies, astutely making Elisabeth responsible by describing them as those "whom I pardoned at your request." She longs to pour out the story of her wrongs in Elisabeth's presence, and urges that she may be sent for at once: "for I am in a piteous condition not merely for a queen but for a simple gentlewoman. For I possess nothing in the world but what I stand up in."

It is the French ambassador who describes, not without a touch of humour, Elisabeth's reception of this letter. She was conscious that, as she said, "all the eyes of Christendom were on her," and that she

ran the risk of calumny whatever course she took. Her first impulse of generous sympathy was probably genuine, though when she declared that she meant to receive Mary in accordance with her former grandeur, and not her present fortune, she must have known that she was safe to offer what Cecil and Bedford would never have suffered her to perform. The Frenchman adds that he shrewdly suspects that if the two queens were together eight days their rival beauty and favour would turn friendship into envy and jealousy. He adds, that when he saw Elisabeth again her sympathy had taken the safe form of regretting effusively all she was unable to do for her cousin. What she said of the Scottish Queen "turned rather to accusation than to her defence."

Meanwhile, impatient as she might be for Elizabeth's answer, Mary was enjoying a triumph of sympathy and partisanship.

The conservative North had remained Catholic. All the great, landed houses were connected by blood or marriage, all were knit together by common memories of the Pilgrimage of Grace and by devout adherence to the Church of Rome. If outwardly loyal to Elisabeth, they despised, distrusted and feared the new men like Cecil and Bedford who guided her policy. Crowds of these country gentlemen flocked to welcome Mary, first at Workington and then at Carlisle, whither by Elisabeth's orders, the High Sheriff, Lowther, had conducted her with all due honour.

She received them all into her presence, dressed, it would appear, in the travel-stained habit in which she had ridden from Langside, but with all her inalienable charm and greatness. It was solace and

excitement to her to pour out the tale of her wrongs and her innocence to listeners prejudiced in her favour.

The greatest among them, the Earl of Northumberland, was anxious to remove her to his own house, but this Lowther had the prudence to resist.

The renewed confidence that Mary drew from all this show of devotion did not dispose her to submit patiently to what course it might be Elisabeth's pleasure to take with her. She had the fatal feminine habit of arranging in imagination both events and other people's actions to suit her own wishes. She pictured herself, a beautiful and innocent suppliant, repeating the tale that so powerfully moved these northern squires, at the feet of a complacent Elisabeth, and firing English courtiers and foreign ambassadors with an eloquent tale of her wrongs.

Her disappointment was poignant, her indignation bitter, when Elisabeth's answer finally came. Warm expressions of sympathy and confidence were worthless, since they only preluded regrets that it was impossible for the English Queen to receive her cousin till she had cleared herself from sinister reports connecting her with her husband's murder, reports which Elisabeth affected indeed to disbelieve, but which, in the meantime, placed a barrier between her own immaculate virtue, and Mary's damaged reputation.

The bearers of this crushing reply were two of the most important noblemen in the kingdom, Lord Scrope, warden of the West Marches, and Sir Francis Knollys, Elisabeth's kinsman on the Bullen side.

It would be hard to find at any period of English

history a finer type than Sir Francis Knollys, of what we proudly claim to be an English gentleman. He was deeply engaged in public affairs, and brought to these perfect disinterestedness, a clear judgment, patience, and a constant preference for plain dealing. For six months he had the task, to him most distasteful, of being Mary's keeper. During that time he was in anxiety about his wife's health, and vexed with the constant cross of Elisabeth's servants, lack of necessary funds, yet he never failed in courtesy, patience and cheerfulness. He read Mary's character clearly, doing full justice to her great qualities. On his arrival at Carlisle on the 28th May, he describes her thus: "We found her in her answers to have an eloquent tongue, a discreet head, a stout courage and a liberal heart." And a little later he exclaims, "Surely this princess is a notable woman!" He is struck by her naturalness, her indifference to ceremony, "beyond acknowledging her royal estate"; her high spirit, "she delights to hear of hardiness and valour, approving all approved hardy men of her country, even though they be among her enemies, and not concealing cowardice of friends." Mary tried her fascination upon the elderly man; he recognised the fact with a quiet humour which proved his security. "And surely she is a rare woman, for as no flattery can lightly abuse her, so no plain speech seemeth to offend her if she think the speaker thereof an honest man; and by this means I would make you believe, she thinks me an honest man!" When, from policy, Mary was affecting willingness to be converted to Anglican usages, Knollys enjoyed being her instructor without having too serious a belief in her good faith. He had been ill of the gout when he

wrote, "for recovery I have wanted no princely courtesy, nor princely medicine, nor princely music, but the music was singing of Psalms to the virginals."

One little incident must have been humiliating to Knollys, both as a well-bred man and as Elisabeth's kinsman. Mary was, as we have seen, destitute of clothes and money and possibly Carlisle was ill supplied with cloth merchants and mantua-makers; at anyrate she had applied to Elisabeth to supply her needs. For the simplest gentlewoman in her train Mary at need would have turned out all her stores. Knollys was present when the parcel sent from one queen to the other was opened. It contained two torn shifts, two small pieces of velvet and two pairs of shoes. Mary's "silence argued scorn rather than gratitude," and Knollys deeply mortified could only mutter that the maid who packed the things had made a mistake.

When Mary first realised the disappointment of all her hopes, the tone of her letters changed at once to indignant upbraiding. She had chosen Elisabeth for the honourable distinction of being the restorer of a queen, but if Elisabeth refused such a chance let her permit Mary to depart to other princes who would gladly take up her cause, "for, thank God, I am not so destitute of friends."

Simultaneously with the arrival of Scrope and Knollys she had sent her own envoys, Fleming and Herries, to court. Herries to advocate her cause with Elisabeth and Fleming to pass on to France.

Not unnaturally, Elisabeth refused to allow Fleming to leave the country. Mary restored to her throne by French soldiers and Scotland once more at the devo-

tion of France was too dangerous a prospect for the English government. The refusal galled Mary and showed her perhaps her helplessness in the trap into which she had stepped inadvertently.

Herries was hardly a prudent ambassador, he took up the same lofty position as Mary; if Elisabeth would not help his mistress, they would apply to other princes, to the Pope. "The Pope!" repeated Protestant Bedford in horror. "Aye or to the Grand Turk," answered the boastful Scotsman.

Mary demanded that she should be heard in Elisabeth's presence in her own vindication. From Scotland Murray offered to enter himself a prisoner to Elisabeth, if he failed to prove his sister's guilt and the righteousness of her deposition. Here was a chance for Elisabeth to declare herself arbitrator between them, and so to hold both at her pleasure.

At the end of June Middlemore was despatched to Scotland to bid Murray suspend hostilities. He was to take Carlisle on his way north and explain to Mary Elisabeth's plan concerning her. There was no courtliness nor sympathy in Middlemore to soften the harshness of the message he brought. He spoke of "trial being made of her innocency," and referred to Elisabeth as "the judge" between her and her subjects. She would admit no judge but God, Mary retorted in passionate indignation, nor could any take upon themselves to judge her; she knew her estate well enough; of her own will she would allow her sister to judge her cause, but only if she were admitted to her presence.

No experience ever shook Mary's conviction that kings were above judgment. Moreover she had come to look upon herself as innocent of the crime imputed

to her by constantly dwelling on the treachery and hypocrisy of those who had shared the sin and now were the accusers. She held like an amulet the incriminating paper Bothwell had given her at Carberry Hill. "Desire my good sister the Queen," she said to Middlemore, "to write that Lethington and Morton (who be two of the wisest, and most able of them to say most against me) may come and then let me be there in her presence, face to face to hear their accusations and to be heard how I can make my purgation; but I think Lethington would be very loth of that commission."

Meantime Herries had succeeded in wringing terms from Elisabeth which he delusively believed to be favourable. The real question of Mary's guilt or innocence was of no moment to any one; the whole question turned on how much it would be judicious to prove against her. Herries was among the most devoted of Mary's friends, yet no enemy could have struck a more fatal blow at her reputation than he did by an impulsive remark. Elisabeth disclaimed all idea of being her cousin's judge. She effected to believe that Mary's subjects could have no grounds for the accusations against her. "But madame if it should appear otherwise—which God forbid?" The amazing part is that Herries repeated this remark to Mary with no explanation nor apology! Nor had it any effect on Elisabeth. Even in such a case she pledged herself to protect her cousin's honour and safety.

The terms she offered her cousin by Herries were perfectly distinct. Mary's subjects were to be brought up for judgment for their disloyal and rebellious conduct. "Even if they allege some reason for so doing (which her Highness thinks they cannot do) her

Highness would set this queen in her seat conditionally, the lords continuing in honour and estate." If they were not able to allege sufficient reasons Mary was to be restored unconditionally, if need be by force. Believing herself fully safeguarded Mary made the mistake of consenting to Elisabeth's conditions.

Murray also had to be reassured before committing his cause to Elisabeth's judgment. To him the conditions ran quite differently, "If her guilt be plainly proved, her majesty would think her unworthy of a kingdom; if there be only suspicions, her majesty would have it considered how she might be restored without danger of relapse."

Behind Elisabeth was Cecil, determined that, whether proved guilty or not, Mary should not be suffered to escape to work mischief against his mistress and her government.

As the autumn weeks passed by, it was torture to Mary to hear of her partisans in Scotland besieged in their castles, despoiled of their lands, forfeited in Parliament. Both sides had undertaken to keep a truce, but Murray on the pretext of repressing disorder, and Mary's party on the plea of self-defence, kept up a cruel internecine warfare. It cut Mary to the quick. "They break down the houses of my servants and I cannot make it up to them, the masters are hung and I can do nothing, and yet they remain faithful to me." Mary was a prince in all points save in the proverbial matter of ingratitude.

In the first week of October the Commission of Inquiry met at York.

There is no more complicated tangle in history than the story of this Conference; a tangle of secret motives, of crossing interests, of conflicting and lying

evidence. No one, except possibly two of the English commissioners, Sussex and Sadler, even wished for a clear issue. The third, the Duke of Norfolk, went into the conference deeply pledged to Mary. His sister, Lady Scrope, was at the time Mary's hostess at Bolton and had assured her of her brother's good-will; the idea had even been mooted of a marriage between them.

We have seen how wavering was Lord Herries' belief in Mary's innocence; the other most important of her commissioners, Bishop Leslie, was equally sceptical; it was the object of both to work for a compromise and a general hushing-up of evidence.

Murray came to the Conference with entire disbelief in Elisabeth's good faith. He had no intention of sparing Mary, her dishonour was the security of his position as Regent; but he was reluctant to break with her completely. Elisabeth might change her policy and force back on Scotland a Queen irreconcilably estranged from her brother. If little James died he might continue to hold the Regency, as it were, for Mary, but if she were so disgraced as to be as good as non-existent, the crown would pass to the Hamiltons.

Even more delicate and full of danger was the position of Lethington. Mary had "that in black and white that would hang Lethington by the neck," and he knew it. A compromise, with Mary safely bestowed in England and, if possible, creditably married and reconciled to himself, such was the subtle and difficult plan Lethington was working for by methods tortuous and ingenious. Morton was in the same case as Lethington, but he had a face of brass and meant to bear down Mary's accusations by the weight of those fatal letters of which he was custodian. One man in-

deed there was at the Conference wholly and tragically in earnest, one who came well furnished with evidence and eager to be heard, old Lennox, the father of the murdered man. The slight attention paid to his pleading is a measure of the unreality of the proceedings. Behind this simulacrum of a commission was Elisabeth, determined that Mary should be disgraced without Murray gaining thereby any independence of action and without loss to herself of the appearance of general benevolence.

Secret messengers passed frequently between York and Bolton. Mary was passing through a troubled and exciting time. She, less than any one, desired a real sifting of the truth, but she was alert and dangerous, ready to fight to the end. Knollys had been at York and on his return on the 14th of October she asked, "When will they proceed to their odious accusations? or will they stay and be reconciled to me? or what will my good sister do for me?" Knollys thought that accusations would be made. "If they fall to extremities," she replied, "they shall be answered roundly and at the full, and then we are past all reconciliation."

The Bothwell marriage and Mary's abdication wasted the time of the Commission in their public sittings. On the 11th October, privately and informally, the Scottish lords produced their strong card, the famous Casket with its enclosures.

There are certain mineral debris, hideous, distorted masses with the living ore scorched out of them, which Nature refuses either to reabsorb or to cover with decent verdure. There are certain things also in human affairs which neither time nor death nor tragic circumstances can soften or dignify.

Such is the written record of lawless passion, already extinct and turned to shame and loathing while those who gave it utterance are yet quick with the desires of life. It is "the expense of spirit in a waste of shame." No familiarity, not even the critical analysis to which it has been a hundred times subjected, can stale the terrible vitality and dramatic horror of that one among the Casket Letters on which the evidence hinges, the so-called Glasgow letter.

It purports to be a letter written by Mary to Bothwell, and sent by French Paris from Glasgow at the time she visited Darnley on his sick-bed. It appears to have been written at various times, chiefly at night. It gives full, vivid, pitiless descriptions of the Queen's conversations with her husband.

The heart of the writer is sorely at odds with itself, now boasting of its hardness "as of a diamond," now sickening at the part it has to play. Throughout, the writer is in complete and confidential accord with her correspondent; she renders an account of all her actions as to one who has the right to control both them and her; she is painfully anxious to please and conciliate, she darkly foreshadows some purpose held in common.

Other papers were shown, some more letters, the series of eleven sonnets, two marriage bonds—one in Huntly's handwriting—a bond guaranteeing those who should sign the Ainslie bond; this last of very doubtful authenticity.

The Commissioners were men of the world and of the court at a time when neither were squeamish; they were colleagues and friends of Leicester who had never cleared up the mystery of Amy Robsart's death, but they were startled and aghast at this

evidence of Mary's guilt. Next day they wrote to Queen Elisabeth: "They showed us one horrible and long letter in her own hand, as they say, containing foul matter and abominable with diverse fond ballads of her own hand . . . the said letters and ballads do discover such inordinate love between herself and Bothwell, her loathsomeness and abhorring of her husband that was murdered, in such sort as every good and godly man cannot but abhor the same."

Yet even in the first horrified account there is a note of dubiety; twice they repeat "if the said letters be written in her own hand"; either there was something suspect in the letters themselves or some one had the art to hint a doubt of their authenticity.

It has been ingeniously conjectured, and with much apparent probability,* that Lethington—whose object it was to disarm and propitiate Mary—was anxious to shake the faith of the Commissioners in the damning evidence of the letters. On the 16th, a Sunday, Lethington had a long ride with Norfolk during which Norfolk told him that it was Elisabeth's purpose that everything should come out to Mary's dishonour. What Lethington told him in return, we do not know; but whereas Norfolk had before advised Mary to accept a compromise even if it involved abdication, he now sent a message to bid her refuse all reconciliation.

Now Norfolk had personal motives for wishing to find Mary innocent. There was no such motive on Sussex's part, yet it was Sussex that wrote, "If her adverse party accuse her of the murder by producing of her letters, she will deny them and accuse the most of them of manifest consent to the murder,

* By Mr Lang in "The Mystery of Mary Stewart," chapter xi.

hardly to be denied; so as upon the trial on both sides, her *proofs will judicially fall out best, as it is thought.*"

Things were at a dead-lock and might have drifted into compromise with a show of saving her honour, but that would not have suited Elisabeth. She was impatient for the disclosures which were to deliver her cousin helpless into her hands. Moreover, she had heard that about the Duke of Norfolk which made her uneasy. She suddenly broke up the Conference, or rather transferred it up to Westminster.

The tension of the next few months would have broken down and driven to a humiliating submission any woman with less magnificent courage than Mary. A wild creature at the last will turn at bay and attack its pursuers, but with what hope of success if it finds itself in a trap overmatched by superior cunning? Mary was a prisoner at four days' distance from the scene where her fate was being decided; her judges were partial; her accusers were admitted to their presence, while she was denied the right of the meanest criminal, that of being brought face to face with her accusers and permitted to reply to them. Yet the English jurists had themselves admitted that this right could not in fairness be denied her. Further, in defiance of all justice, she never even saw the evidence brought against her. She had to act through Commissioners with whom—owing to the distance—she could only communicate at intervals. She was dependent for information on her keepers, who made no pretence of believing her to be anything but guilty. Yet not for a moment did she lose heart or hope. At the height of her anxiety Knollys wrote of her with half-reluctant admiration, "She has courage

enough to hold out as long as any jot of hope may be left to her."

It is necessary to sketch as briefly as may be the miscarriage of justice at this Westminster Conference.

Mary's Commissioners had been instructed that if the action were changed, and she were put in the place of the accused instead of the accuser, they were to break off negotiations. Unfortunately she also instructed them to try and effect a reconciliation before any accusation should have been made.

Elisabeth was bent on wringing out of Murray the worst that could be said about his sister. She did this on the pretence that she believed so implicitly in his inability to prove Mary's guilt that she desired that he should be condemned out of his own mouth. With a show of reluctance—kept up till the incriminating documents were snatched in rough horse-play from his secretary's bosom—Murray produced his accusation. It had grown in definiteness and heinousness. Now Bothwell is the mere executer of the murder, it was devised and commanded by Mary.

At this stage Mary's Commissioners demanded that the action should be stopped and their mistress allowed to appear to answer to these accusations. They went down to Hampton Court to press their demands on Queen Elisabeth. Unfortunately they fatuously took the opportunity of suggesting to Cecil and Leicester that matters might yet be compromised, the accusation withdrawn and Mary and her subjects reconciled.

Elisabeth took advantage of this blunder. To compromise at this stage would be to the dishonour of her good sister, it would look as if she were afraid of the evidence that might be brought against her.

"She did so much prefer the estimation of her sister's innocency that before she would allow the matter to be stayed she must have the Earl of Murray roundly and sharply charged with his audacious defaming of his sovereign." As to Mary's pleading her own cause, Elisabeth affected to believe the evidence so certain to break down that her presence would be unnecessary.

That evidence, unsoftened, uncurtailed, Elisabeth was determined to have, determined also that it should be known to all her chief nobility. More members had been added to the Commission. Cecil, of course, and Bacon, and now were added the men known to be most favourable to Mary's cause, Northumberland, Westmoreland, Derby, Shrewsbury and others. [Whatever their opinion of the evidence against her may have been we shall find several of them raising rebellion on her behalf in the course of the ensuing months.]

In three days, and these among the shortest and darkest of the year, the mass of incriminating papers were examined. They lay scattered on the table and were taken up at hap-hazard. There was no cross-examining, nor calling of witnesses, nor was an expert in handwriting consulted.

At the end only four of the noblemen present, Cecil, Sadler, Leicester and Bacon, declared themselves convinced. Others were diffident of judging, or thought that the Queen of Scots should have been heard in her defence. Yet they were brought round to agree that, as the case did now stand, Elisabeth could not admit Mary into her presence, "the rather as they had seen such foul stuff."

There was a show of offering Mary a right of reply. It was proposed that some accredited noble-

man might be sent down to hear what she had to say or she might appoint someone to answer for her.

Knollys was convinced that she would never answer the accusations except by declaring them false on the word of a princess. She sent a long and vehement counter accusation of her enemies, but it was indefinite, and the last bolt in her quiver, the incriminating paper, she never discharged.

The worst and weakest point in the whole travesty of law and justice was the final summing up of Elisabeth on the 10th. Nothing had been proved, she declared, to the discredit of Murray and his allies nor on the other hand had they produced anything "whereby the Queen of England should conceive or take any evil opinion of the Queen her good sister for anything yet seen."

CHAPTER XVI

NORFOLK

February 1569—July 1569

AT the trial of the Duke of Norfolk in January 1572 Sergeant Barham, the hectoring advocate for the crown, made this rhetorical inquisition into the Duke's motive for wishing to marry the Queen of Scots.

"You never saw her, you could not then be carried with love of her person; you conceived ill opinion of her . . . the fame of her good qualities and virtuous condition you never heard much of except it were by herself or the Bishop of Ross"; and he goes on to draw the conclusion that Norfolk was attracted to Mary solely as to one claiming a right to Elisabeth's throne, and that consequently all his action in regard to her was an act of high treason.

When one follows Norfolk's career from point to point, one sees reason enough for the Sergeant's question. He was the last man in the world to head a great conspiracy. He had not the elementary requisite of knowing what he wanted. On all points he halted between two opinions. He was never sure that Mary was not the murderess and adulteress he once admitted to Queen Elisabeth that she was, yet he risked life, lands and honour for the sake of marrying her. He was ever doubtful whether "the religion" he and she meant to establish was to be a Protestantism such as Murray would approve, or a Catholic reaction

such as would secure the support of Philip of Spain. He conspired at one and the same time to obtain Mary in marriage at the hand of Queen Elisabeth, and to free her by force and set her on the throne with the aid of an invading Spanish army.

At the time of the York Conference he was restless and discontented. He, with the rest of the older nobility, could not see with complacency the ascendency of the new and abler men to whom Elisabeth entrusted the conduct of affairs. He was only thirty-three and a widower for the third time. His domestic bereavements had built up his fortunes. To rise by alliances was the frankly worldly habit of all great and noble houses. Lands and possessions Norfolk had already secured, the vision of a crown in possession and another in reversion appealed to a vanity which masqueraded as ambition. Perhaps the simplest explanation of his ill-calculated action lies in the fascination that vast and complicated ambitions have for the incapable.

Yet fate dealt patiently with Norfolk. At every stage there were clear indications of danger given and a way left open by which he could have retreated with safety and honour. But half-heartedly, lacking alike conviction and personal devotion, he stumbled along the path which led only to dishonour and the scaffold. He was to die for the sake of a woman who was nothing to him, and to reflect bitterly that "nothing that anybody goeth about for her nor that she doeth for herself prospereth."

Whether the idea of a marriage between Norfolk and the Queen of Scots originated with him or had been suggested by Leicester, as some thought, it had certainly been mooted to Mary before the York

Conference. Then came the revelation of the Casket Letters which gave Norfolk pause — as it well might!

In his private talk with Murray in the gallery of his lodging, before the revelation of the letters, Norfolk had persuaded the Regent to suppress his accusations and work for a compromise; though in his earlier talks with Lethington he had seemed to repudiate the idea of the marriage.

There must have been an extraordinary persuasiveness in the apparent frankness and clear reasonableness of Lethington, as contrasted with the sanctimoniousness and embarrassment of Murray. That Sunday ride at Carwood seems to have brought Norfolk back to his first views and plans. Yet, so unstable was he, that it was probably during the Westminster Conference that he vehemently defended himself to Elisabeth from the accusation of aiming at such a marriage.

"To what end should I seek to marry her, being so wicked a woman, such a notorious adulterer and murderer? I love to sleep on a safe pillow. In my bowling-green at Norwich, I account myself as good a prince as the Queen of Scots; the revenues of Scotland are not comparable to mine own that I enjoy by your goodness. If I should seek to match with her, knowing as I do, that she pretendeth a title to the present possession of your crown, your Majesty might justly charge me with seeking your crown from your head."

Yet this was nothing but the exaggerated heat of deception, for at the end of the Conference a serious warning was conveyed to Murray that he had incensed the Duke by his broken pledges and open

accusation of his sister. The whole of the North, he was told, was at the Duke's devotion and he ran serious risk of having his throat cut between York and Berwick on his homeward journey. The danger was so real, that Murray—though he was no coward where his person was concerned—remained in the south unwilling to take the risk.

Throckmorton, always a friend to Mary and the Scottish succession, worked for an understanding between Norfolk and Murray and arranged a secret meeting in the Park of Hampton Court. There is a theatrical and self-conscious ring about the speeches of both the noblemen. Murray protested that Mary had once been the creature on earth dearest to him, and that if she would come to herself and renounce her godless marriage with Bothwell, and especially if she married some pious and honest gentleman, he would find it in his heart to love her as well as ever he did. Norfolk, in equally noble and touching diction, ended up with "Earl of Murray, thou hast Norfolk's life in thy hands." At the very time of the interview Mary was being removed from Bolton and the care of Knollys and Scrope to Tutbury and the charge of the Earl of Shrewsbury. Sir James Melville, hastily despatched by Norfolk, met her at Ripon, and from thence she wrote to Westmoreland bidding him and his friends to leave the Scottish Regent unmolested.

The energy with which Mary had struggled against removal from Bolton proves the necessity there was for the step. Knollys was being relieved of his charge; single-handed, Scrope's guardianship was not to be trusted. Lady Scrope was sister to Norfolk and also to Lady Westmoreland. Messages passed frequently between Mary and the northern Catholics,

hopeful, exciting messages, fatal alike for her and them.

Early in January, triumphantly ignoring Commissioners, accusations and disgrace, she had written to the Bishop of Ross, "Tell the Spanish ambassador that if his master will help me, I shall be Queen of England in three months, and mass shall be said all over the country."

Spain had always floated, a golden mirage, on Mary's horizon. There had always been personal difficulties, jealousies and antipathies in her dealings with the French and English governments. In dealing with Spain she was dealing with a prince personally unknown to her, so that she had no difficulty in crediting him with disinterested regard for her and generous pity of her woes. She was on firmer ground when she believed that the Catholic cause in the British Islands had a strong claim on Philip's religious zeal. For twenty years she was to be the victim of his promises and his lethargy.

The Queen of Spain, Madame Elisabeth, the only really lovable child of Catherine de Medici, had sent her old play-fellow a letter of sympathy in her troubles. Mary seized eagerly the opportunity of placing her case intimately and favourably before Elisabeth's husband. She could report that England was Catholic at heart, that she had gained the affection of many to her cause, and that, however appearances might seem to be against it, she was prepared to die for the cause of religion.

Even if Madame Elisabeth had tried her gentle advocacy with her husband it would not have filled his empty treasury, nor appeased Alva's mutinous Spanish soldiers, nor repressed the gathering storm in the

Netherlands. Not the most arbitrary of rulers, not the most Catholic of kings was free to follow his convictions and his sympathies in the sixteenth any more than in any other century. Madame Elisabeth might have done something perhaps to restore Philip's confidence in the Queen of Scots, sorely shattered by her Protestant marriage; whatever her influence might have done, it was removed a few months later by her early death.

It seemed in the winter of 1569 as if events would compel Philip to justify Mary's hopes. From various causes relations between the Spanish and English governments had been strained to the cracking point. De Silva, the Spanish ambassador, whose good sense, toleration and enlightened sense of honour, were all guarantees of peace, had been replaced by de Guérau d'Espes a man of different calibre. As eager a plotter as was ever de Silva's predecessor, the Bishop of Aquila, he was also imbued with fanatical, aggressive neo-Catholicism, the spirit which, from Pius V. downwards, was putting new and living force into the Church. De Guérau's lodging at the Spanish Embassy soon became a centre of restless disaffection.

Meanwhile, though she was buoying herself up with the belief that events were working for her, the winter was passing dismally enough for Mary at Tutbury, the most cheerless of her prisons.

Discomfort had been severe enough at Loch Leven, but the walls of the four-square tower were several feet thick; fresh air blew from the surrounding hills and the occasional sunshine was flashed upon her windows from the sparkling waters of the lake. At Tutbury, on the top of a windy eminence, a low, rambling timber and plaster house was sunk between

the walls of a square enclosure in such a manner that the walls rose on one side as high as the roof of the house and on another were no more than six yards distant from the windows. The house was occasionally used by the Shrewsburys as a hunting lodge, and was thoroughly out of repair, the roof leaking and the plaster peeling off in strips. A bare vegetable plot was all the view from Mary's windows; the two rooms she inhabited were so draughty that all the carpets and hangings brought by the Shrewsburys from Sheffield were quite ineffectual to keep out the wintry chill, and the walls were so damp that mould gathered on the furniture in four days. In the midst of this dilapidation and with hygienic conditions incredible to modern experience a certain pomp and ceremonial were yet sustained. Mary had her cloth of state and services of gold and silver, even her hand-basin was of precious metal. After a few weeks Lord Shrewsbury, impatient of the discomfort of Tutbury, obtained permission to remove his charge to his own manor of Wingfield, as fair and stately a mansion as any in England. It was always to Tutbury that Mary was hurried when any crisis made stricter imprisonment advisable.

In the small crowded dwelling-house at Loch Leven the human drama, at least, had been intense and intimate. Mary's health, on the whole, had been good there, her nerves tense, her mind occupied with winning favour and affection. At the bottom of Scottish hearts there has always been a contradictory romantic vein, at any moment ready to swing round to the ancient kings against whom they were the first to rebel. Mary never fully realised that with her advent on English ground her spells were broken,

WINGFIELD MANOR

BESS OF HARDWICK

Her familiar servants indeed were to hold to her with passionate devotion; later on she was to become the ideal figure for whom ardent Catholics were to plot and die, but, as far as her gaolers were concerned, the "enchantment whereby men were bewitched" was to fall powerless on English gentlemen, secure in loyalty to Gloriana, in national prejudice and in the friction of daily arguments on the limits of their charge's liberty. In addition to these securities Lord Shrewsbury was protected from too warm an interest in his beautiful charge by lively preoccupation with his own health, by the constant economic worries inseparable from Elisabeth's service, and by a wife who, whether she were kind or curst, played too large a part in his life to leave room for another woman.

Lady Shrewsbury, the famous Bess of Hardwick, was not likely to be carried away by generous sympathy with the captive Queen, though she watched the political sky keenly and accommodated her behaviour to Mary according as her prospects brightened or darkened. Through Lady Shrewsbury's long, active and prosperous life she single-mindedly pursued her own interests and those of her eight Cavendish children. She built houses, added field to field, accumulated house-stuff, secured settlements and jointures from four successive husbands, intrigued for marriages for her children, quarrelled with most of her relations, and died at a good old age, the ancestress of half the great houses in the kingdom.

In the early days when any political change or chance might have landed Mary on the throne, or at least have declared her next heir, it was worth Lady Shrewsbury's while to be polite and serviceable. Mr Richard, the third of the Cavendish sons, was in

the Duke of Norfolk's company and partly in his confidence.

In the summer of 1569 Elisabeth, realising the danger and inconvenience of keeping Mary a prisoner, was entertaining her cousin with the first of endless negotiations for her restoration. Over and over again the same conditions were to be offered to Mary with no intention of their being fulfilled. She was to give up her claim to the English throne, to be reconciled to her rebels, to renounce the old alliance with France and form a closer one with England, and accept Elisabeth's dictation as to her marriage and conduct generally.

While these negotiations were pending, Mr Cavendish arrived at his step-father's mansion with a secret proposal from some of the most important lords of the Privy Council, Lord Lumley, Lord Pembroke, Lord Leicester, Lord Arundel and others. They suggested that Mary should accept some English nobleman in marriage and pointed out the Duke of Norfolk, the head of the English peerage, as the fittest for the purpose. Even Cecil affected to be favourable to the proposal. Leicester was so deep in the scheme that he wrote Mary a separate affectionate letter—a letter carefully preserved to be used if ever it should be advisable, as a thorn in Elisabeth's flesh.

The proposal was an earnest that these noblemen meant that Mary's right of succession should be recognised. Mary's answer was admirable in prudence and dignity. She referred to the vexations of her former marriages and declared that she was now minded to live a solitary life all her days; still if the Queen and nobility of England desired her re-marriage she could be content, and "especially in favour of the Earl of Norfolk whom she liked before all others."

Perhaps her reluctance was not all feigned. She had other strings to her bow. A rising of the Catholics in her favour, a Spanish army landing on the east coast, a sudden raid on Wingfield, a rescue, and she herself again at the head of armed men marching in triumph on London; these were the visions with which she preferred to kindle her imagination.

It was the mistake of her policy that she must needs entertain every offer made to her. So the Norfolk negotiations went on and the Norfolk correspondence began, that curious series of unreal love letters with their frozen expressions of affection. Unconvincing as is the devotion they express, they are painfully characterised by Mary's habit of offering unreserved submission to her lover. Norfolk responded in a similar artificial vein. He sent her, by Lord Boyd, a ruby which she wore beneath her gown, and subscribed his letter with a warmth which Mary did not allow him to forget.

Lord Boyd then proceeded on his way to Scotland with a joint commission from both to the Scottish Lords. The main difficulty in the matter had not been faced; no one had dared to approach Elisabeth with the suggestion of such a thing. Any news of an intended marriage was apt to irritate Elisabeth; a marriage proposal for her cousin that would involve her recognition as next heir would produce a storm before which the bravest might quail. It was judged more politic that the proposal should come from Scotland and that Lethington, always a grateful presence to Elisabeth, should be the spokesman.

Norfolk, whose duplicity of character was equalled by his simplicity of understanding, calculated on

Murray's loyal support. He delivered himself into his hands when he wrote to him on July 1st, 1569. "I have proceeded so far therein that I can neither with conscience revoke what I have done nor with honour proceed further until you shall remove all such stumbling blocks as are hindrances to our more apparent proceedings. When these obstacles are removed, the rest shall follow to your contentment and comfort."

Yet "these obstacles," *i.e.* the Bothwell marriage, were precisely the safeguards of Murray and his Scottish supporters and they were in no hurry to remove them.

The Scottish Parliament met in July, in Perth, to consider and reject Elisabeth's proposals for Mary's restoration. Then came the question of the Bothwell marriage. Two years earlier Mary's refusal to consent to a divorce had been made the pretext for her imprisonment, almost for her death, *now* they treated the proposal as impious and not to be entertained. Murray, while affecting to favour his sister's request, was working dead against her. It was in vain that Lethington scorched the inconsistency of the Lords with the fire of his fine wit. Ever since York he had been working hard for Mary and the Norfolk alliance, and had consequently become an embarrassment and source of irritation to the Regent. The evidence of his complicity in the murder had been suppressed as long as it suited Murray's convenience, but now it was suddenly sprung upon him. Crawford of Jordanhill, a Lennox man, accused him in an open meeting at Stirling and he was imprisoned. He was shortly afterwards placed in the charge of Kirkcaldy of Grange, now Captain of the Castle of Edinburgh. The soldier

was no more contented than the Secretary with Murray and Morton and their policy. Together they were to form a party which for three more years were to uphold Mary's forlorn cause in Scotland.

In the meantime, if a marriage between Mary and Norfolk were to be placed in a favourable light before Elisabeth, it would not be by the persuasive voice of the Flower of the Wits of Scotland.

CHAPTER XVII

TWO PICTURES

THE effort to follow the course of these negotiations leaves the historical student perplexed and wearied, baffled in every effort to understand or respect the motives of anyone of the actors. But hunting among the documents he is relieved to catch again and again glimpses of the Scottish Queen, the living, authentic woman whom he came to know in France, at Holyrood and at Loch Leven. She is always the same—alert, high-spirited, irresistibly natural and gracious.

As much from instinct as from deliberate policy she never lost an opportunity of winning hearts and captivating imaginations. Here are two pictures of her in the first year of her captivity in England.

The first is from the lips of a young Catholic gentleman, Mr Christopher Norton, who happened to be serving under Knollys and Scrope at the latter's Castle of Bolton. He was later imprisoned for his share in the Northern Rising and it was in the course of his defence that he gave the following charming and unaffected account of his acquaintance with the Queen of Scots. He formed one of the guard who kept watch on her and her attendants. Through the good offices of Lady Livingston he had had one interview with the queen. She had done him a kindness in writing to the Spanish ambassador on

BOLTON CASTLE

behalf of a kinsman of Norton's, a prisoner in Spain. She who knew everything that it concerned her to know, knew him to be a member of one of those noble, devout, old Catholic houses of the North, always romantically ready to risk life and lands for their religion, and she recognised him to be a gallant and generous young gentleman whom it would not be hard to win. We owe to him an unforgettable picture of a winter afternoon at Bolton Castle.

"One day when the Queen of Scots had been sitting at the window, knitting of a work, after the board was covered, she rose and went to the fire-side, and, making haste to have her work finished, would not lay it away but worked at it while she was warming herself and looked for one of her own servants which were all gone to fetch their meat. Seeing none of her own folk there, she caused me to hold her work as I was looking at my Lord Scrope and Sir Francis Knollys playing at chess. I went, thinking it would not become me to refuse. Lady Scrope standing by the fire and many gentlemen in the chamber saw that she did not speak to me and I do not think Sir Francis Knollys saw or heard when she called me. When he had played his mate, seeing me standing by the Queen he called my captain and asked if I watched. Then he commanded that I should watch no more and said the Queen would make me a fool."

Is not this candid narrative like a perspective glass through which we see clearly these figures sitting and moving in the firelight in the dim November afternoon?

If the next account we have of Mary in her prison lacks the vividness of Chris Norton's narrative, it is because the writer is making an effort to be

impressive and is too reminiscent of his own share in the conversation.

Mary was already settled in the lugubrious Castle of Tutbury under Lord Shrewsbury's care when Mr Nicholas White, a correspondent of Cecil, turned aside on his way to Ireland to visit the Earl. In these early days Shrewsbury was a lenient gaoler and strangers had easy access to the Queen. Mary received White in a room where the costly hangings and furniture could not cover the dilapidation. He marked the device embroidered on her cloth of state. *En ma fin est mon commencement*, and was perplexed as to its meaning. To Mary and her embroiderer it probably meant some pious commonplace, to us it foreshadows volumes of controversy and a tale of such undying interest that each generation must tell it afresh.

The sight of a strange face must have been a pleasant variety to Mary, otherwise the pedantry and sermonising of Master Nicholas must have tried her patience and politeness. No woman was ever more preached at than Mary. White brought her the news of Lady Knollys' death, and she was so sincerely sympathetic that it was unnecessary to explain to her that she was the innocent cause of the lady's lonely death-bed.

With admirable politeness Mary accepted Master Nicholas' admonition to cultivate a grateful spirit not only to God but to her cousin the Queen of England, and to "think herself rather prince-like entertained than hardly restrained of anything that was fit for her grace's estate." "This," the self-complacent moralist declared, "she very gently accepted"; he did not perceive her delicate irony when she added,

"that as for content in this her present state, she would not require it at God's hands but only patience which she humbly prayed him to give her."

There is a charm about the exclusively feminine art of needlework that women, whatever their quality or gifts, should be slow to relinquish. It softens one's heart to this queenly creature, the perplexity of every European government, the terror of English statesmen, to think of her amusing her tedious days matching her silks and covering curtains and altar-cloths with pretty devices. "She said that all the day she wrought with her needle and that the diversity of the colours did make it seem less tedious, and continued so long at it till very pain did make her to give it over." One habit of the Queen, White mentions, which seems to have been characteristic of her all her life, the habit of sitting up late. "The Queen over-watches them all, for it is one of the clock at least every night ere she goes to bed." It was then that she was occupied with her correspondence.

Cased as he was in a double armour of loyalty to his own Queen and preoccupation with himself, Master Nicholas felt the fascination of the Scottish Queen to be so dangerous that he seriously advises Cecil that "few subjects in this land should have access to this Lady." "For besides that she is a goodly person—yet in truth not comparable to our Queen—she hath withal an alluring grace, a pretty Scottish accent, and a searching wit clouded with mildness."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE NORTHERN RISING AND THE RIDOLFI PLOT

1569, 1571—1572

NORFOLK accompanied Elisabeth on her progress, hung about her in gardens and other leisurely places but could find no moment when courage and occasion coincided. Leicester professed to be paving the way for his confidences. Elisabeth herself seemed at times to invite them. On his arrival from London she asked meaningly if he brought no news of a marriage. Once, in her hoydenish way she gave him a nip and bade him look well to his pillow. So long as it was mere suspicion, she played with the idea, but, when either through the faithless Leicester's confession or the gossip of her ladies, the plan was made clear to her the usual burst of fury fell upon Norfolk.

Elisabeth's next step was to demand from Murray a full account of his dealings with Norfolk. With unhesitating alacrity, Murray delivered into her hand the unfortunate man who had subscribed himself his "faithful friend and natural brother."

In his first resentful excitement Norfolk had ridden from Andover to London persuading himself that he was going to seize the Tower and raise a rebellion, but the excitement ebbed away and with it all his resolution. Spirits more fiery and chivalrous than his, the Northern Lords, were prepared to rise at a moment's notice, but he only sent them a chilling message bidding them postpone their rising. He

retired to his own estate in Norfolk and incensed Elisabeth by refusing to return to court at her command and then disheartened his friend by obeying the summons when obedience had lost all grace and could only be attributed to fear.

It was one of the torturing conditions of Mary's captivity that the first indication she had of any of her plans miscarrying was a sudden unexplained increase of rigour in the conditions of her imprisonment. At the end of September, Shrewsbury's ill-health was made the pretext for associating with him in his charge Huntingdon and Hertford, both claimants to the English succession, and consequently little inclined to treat Mary with favour or leniency. She was suddenly spirited off from pleasant, roomy Wingfield to the gloom and discomfort of Tutbury, and at one stroke her household was reduced from sixty servants to thirty, while all letters and messages sent out or received had to pass through her jailor's hands.

Three days after her arrival at Tutbury, a surprise visit was paid to her rooms and all her own and her servant's coffers ransacked, while men with loaded pistols guarded the doors. She made the most of the indignity both to Elisabeth and to the French ambassador. Her papers she had had the prudence to destroy. She had probably been in secret communication with the Northern Lords. Late in October, Lord and Lady Northumberland were at Wentworth House in the neighbourhood of Sheffield. The Lady was eager to introduce herself into the household at Tutbury disguised as the mid-wife for Bastian's wife. Had she succeeded she had meant to change clothes with the Queen, and Mary, once in friendly

Catholic hands, would have headed the Northern Rising in person and given it the rallying point it needed.

This gallant, generous, ill-fated rebellion forms, with the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Derwentwater Rebellion, the tragic trilogy of the loyal and conservative North of England.

Alva, on whose co-operation everything turned, had given no sign, the Duke of Norfolk, who was to raise the Southern Counties, had missed his chance and was in the Tower. Northumberland and Westmoreland were half-hearted, high-spirited ladies like Lady Northumberland were precipitate, devout priests were urgent, and noble gentlemen, like old Norton and his eleven sons, felt their honour too deeply engaged to retire.

The first signal to Mary that her friends had risen was the influx of a hundred armed guards into her prison, the coming and going of mounted scouts, and the throwing up of embankments round the house. The alarm of her jailors must have filled her with exultation. The danger grew nearer, the rescuing host was within 58 miles, when orders came suddenly from court, Huntington, who had been absent, returned and within twenty-four hours Mary was carried off to Coventry. There she had to be accommodated in an inn but was strictly kept from all concourse of people, the two Earls jealously watching one another. For them it was an anxious time. Elisabeth's ministers considered the chance of rescue so probable that it was afterwards believed that they sent down the Great Seal to Coventry so that if the rebels approached in force, the Queen might be suddenly executed with due legality.

The Northern Rising was stamped out in blood and fire. The chiefs fled across the Border to Scotland. Murray outraged the national sense of hospitality by taking Northumberland prisoner and using him as a convenient piece in the game he was playing with Elisabeth. Then the storm died down and Mary was brought back to Tutbury where the rigour of her captivity was gradually relaxed.

In January 1570 came the news that Murray had been assassinated, shot down in the streets of Linlithgow by a Hamilton who owed him a private grudge. Mary made no pretence of concealing her satisfaction "Bothwellhaugh acted without any prompting from me," she wrote to the Cardinal, "but I am as grateful to him as if it had been done by my advice." Out of her French dowry she settled a pension on the assassin.

And so Murray passes out of the story.

If history were written on the principle of "The Ring and the Book," the great desideratum for the understanding of the period would be a biography of Murray. We know the events from Mary's point of view, from Elisabeth's and from Knox's; an attempt has been made to unravel the subtleties of Lethington's changing motives; poetry has even thrown a doubtful light on the disconcerting commonplaceness of Bothwell's character; events would take a strangely altered aspect if we could see them as Murray saw them, "through his fingers."

Murray's death brought little advantage to Mary's party in Scotland. Old Lennox was sent down as Regent and guardian of the little king. Our old acquaintance Randolph accompanied him to earn diligently what special malediction waits on those who

are the direct opposite of peacemakers. An English army marched across the Border to punish Mary's supporters for the protection extended to Elisabeth's rebels.

The constant ill news from Scotland, the sufferings of her friends cut Mary to the quick. For days she would go about with eyelids swollen and red from weeping. Often, too, ill news was followed by the peculiar malady she was subject to. She had prolonged fainting fits and sickness, such as she had had at Jedburgh; at other times she had feverish colds and the old weary pain in her side. She never minimised her sufferings, they were useful for playing on the fears and feelings of her cousin. Elisabeth was pitiless with the pitilessness of a self-satisfied, sentimental egotist, but she had a curious anticipation of how posterity would pronounce between the two queens. She dreaded above all things that Mary should die on her hands.

To understand the changing and apparently capricious treatment of Mary by Elisabeth it would be necessary to follow every movement in European politics. With the sensitiveness of a thermometer the household life at Tutbury or Sheffield registered Elisabeth's relations to the courts of France or Spain. In the summer of 1570, it again suited Elisabeth to enter into negotiations with Mary for her restoration and, this time, with such apparent seriousness that in October Cecil himself and Mildmay were sent to make arrangements with the Scottish Queen.

The Shrewsbury household had moved over the hills to Chatsworth that summer by reason of the plague which was devastating the country. It was prevalent in London also, especially in the populous

district about the Tower, so that Norfolk had been released in August and was only kept in ward in his own house. Before leaving the Tower, he had given Elisabeth a written promise to renounce all intention of marrying the Queen of Scots and had sealed it with his arms. This was the last door through which Norfolk might have beaten an honourable retreat, and returned to the conventional loyalty and splendid nonentity for which he was suited. His wishes as well as his honour probably pointed that way; but honour unrelated to honesty is but a blind leader of the blind. Letters from Mary expressing absolute dependence on his will and signed "Your own, my Norfolk, faithful to death," confused still more that troubled sense of honour and committed his halting resolution. "If you mind not to shrink in this matter I will die and live with you," she wrote, "Your fortune shall be mine, therefore let me know in all things your mind."

With such firm, light threads the web was woven from which he found no escape.

The Norfolk correspondence was only one of the many strands Mary held in her hand. She was in active correspondence with Lethington, now the life and brain of her party in Scotland. Constant plots were made for her escape. Inside and outside of the Shrewsbury household romantic young gentlemen or enterprising agents were at watch and ward. Some trusty servant of Mary would give them rendezvous at daybreak on the moors above Sheffield; the height from the ground of her windows was measured, page's or scullion's dresses provided. But Lethington's advice was against such attempts, the risk was too great. He advised unconditional consent

to Elisabeth's terms; once restored and on her throne Mary might rescind her compliance.

Besides the former conditions offered to Mary, there were two at which she demurred. She was to hand over Northumberland and all such rebels as were in the custody of any subject of Scotland. With a side glance at the treatment she was herself receiving, Mary answered that it might not stand with her honour "to deliver those who are come for refuge within her country, as it were, to enter them in a place of execution."

Another point was her placing her son in the hands of Elisabeth to be brought up in England. There is no sign that Mary had any motherly yearning over her poor, deserted little son, but as King of Scotland and Elisabeth's heir he was a valuable piece in her game, to be offered to Philip of Spain, or conceded to Elisabeth, as policy dictated. The most human feeling she showed in connection with him was the outburst of indignation when she heard that George Buchanan, the unscrupulous defamer of the mother, had been appointed as tutor to the son. When the question was raised at Chatsworth of the boy's education in England Mary, who never lost an opportunity of gaining a friend, wrote to his grandmother, old Lady Lennox, to consult her wishes. The blandishment had no effect at the time, but two years later the ladies were reconciled.

It was thus at Chatsworth that Mary had her first and only meeting with the most implacable of her opponents. Cecil was the more dangerous because his opposition was entirely on public grounds. He was probably quite sincere when he praised Mary to Leslie as "a lady of gentle and clement disposition."

Had she been an angel from Heaven his feelings would have known no softening as long as she was a menace to Elisabeth and the Protestant religion.

Reluctantly, and with small faith in its fulfilment, Mary accepted the treaty, taking care to inform the Pope and other foreign princes of all it cost her to concede so much to her Protestant enemies. But she did definitely accept the conditions.

The treaty had further to be endorsed by three Scottish Commissioners of her party and three of the other side. Her Commissioners were in London and ready to sign by December but Morton Makgill and Pitcairn, who were to sign on behalf of the King's government, delayed their coming for months and then came only to raise difficulties. It was all that Elisabeth wanted. She had gained the time to go deeply into negotiations for the Anjou marriage, the political game she was playing at the moment. Fearing now no interference of France in Scottish affairs she could afford to drop all further reference to the treaty with Mary.

It is small wonder and quite excusable that Mary came to regard her relations to her cousin as simply a state of war in which cunning and dissimulation were legitimate weapons.

She had had a wretched winter at Sheffield Castle, Lord Shrewsbury's chief seat. She always felt the cold, and the winter was rigorous. She had one attack so alarming that two doctors were sent down to attend on her. Hope deferred tried her nerves and suspended for a time her active plotting but by March 1571, having lost all faith in the treaty, having no hope from Scotland and seeing France closed against

her by the Anjou courtship, she threw herself unreservedly on the King of Spain, inviting him definitely to aid her cause and that of the Catholics by an invasion of England.

Three men, born plotters and busy-bodies, de Guérau, the Bishop of Ross, and Ridolfi, a rich Florentine banker in London and at the same time a secret agent of the Pope, arranged all the details of the scheme and dragged the irresolute Duke of Norfolk along with them.

In Mary's letter to Philip she makes no pretence of merely asking for help to punish her rebels in Scotland, she aims distinctly at the throne of England and the restoration of the Catholic religion. She explains that others besides the Catholics are discontented with Elisabeth's government, and excuses Norfolk's delay in declaring himself a Catholic on the ground that he would lose his influence with the Protestant malcontents by such a step. Addressing the Pope she applies for release from her "pretended marriage" with Bothwell, telling the story of the abduction in the incredible and colourless form in which she liked to think of it in later years. To propitiate Philip, she was emphatic that no one in France, not even her own kinsfolk, should have an inkling of the conspiracy.

The accompanying letter from the Duke of Norfolk was concerned with the numbers and arms of the invading Spanish army. He gave definite promise of co-operation and discussed the ports suitable for a landing. A list was added of the English nobility marked according to their several sentiments; a majority was marked as favourable to a change of government. Armed with these letters Ridolfi first

visited Alva at Brussels, then went to Rome and ended at Seville where he found the Spanish king.

Slow to take up ideas as he was, Philip was certainly arrested by a plan so distinct and promises so definite. Alva, his hands full with rebellion fermenting in the Netherlands and discontent in his army, saw difficulties. Of the plan, it is true, he approved, but it must be on the clear understanding that the English Catholics would undertake, by some means or other, to remove Queen Elisabeth. Only when this was an accomplished fact would he advise his master to risk so great an enterprise as an invasion. The Pope, Pius V., smoothed the way for conscientious Catholics by launching a Bull of excommunication against Elisabeth. Even in Catholic times these missiles had fallen innocuously on our shores; in the Protestant days of Elisabeth the Bull fell practically unnoticed.

So the plot halted between the timidity of Norfolk, who would not move till backed by an invading army, and the prudence of Philip, who would not move till the English Catholics were committed to open rebellion; sorry allies these for the fiery fettered spirit at Sheffield!

Modern ingenuity has invented no detective story of more engrossing interest than the method by which, stage after stage, the Ridolfi conspiracy was brought to light by Cecil and his agents. But the fascination of such stories lies in detail and slow development, and for these the reader is referred to the pages of Mr Froude where full justice is done to every ingenious and painful particular.

The chief minister of state, deliberately ordering poor wretches to the rack, or, worse, surprising their confidences through the hypocritical sympathy of

spies masquerading as fellow-sufferers, is a hideous spectacle, however much we may apply a trained historical imagination to the study of the facts.

Small treacheries sicken one more than great betrayals, when they trade on some generous or compassionate instinct in the victim. Burghley, in some treacherous game which he and Sir John Hawkins were playing with the Spanish king, required for his tool a letter of credit from the Scottish Queen. It made it no better that the honest Catholic gentleman, employed for this end, was himself a dupe. He was introduced to Mary as one having friends in a Spanish dungeon on whose behalf he begged for her good offices with Philip. There is a touching dignity in her reply. She seemed doubtful at first, yet said that "She must pity all prisoners for that she was used as one herself, having all intelligence taken from her; yet she would do any pleasure she could to relieve any Englishman out of prison." "All intelligence taken from her," that was one of the nightmare conditions of her captivity.

All summer (1571) Burghley and his servants were seeking for more evidence of the plot. The Bishop of Ross put them off with half admissions; he and his mistress had been in correspondence with Philip and Alva, but only with regard to help against the rebels of Scotland.

So far nothing could be traced to Norfolk and his friends, Lumley and Arundel. In September the clue to the whole matter came accidentally into Cecil's hands. The Anjou courtship notwithstanding, the French government, was unwilling to lose all hold on Mary. A sum of six hundred pounds destined for the Queen's party in Scotland was sent under cover to La

Mothe, the French ambassador ; it was to be conveyed by means furnished by the Duke of Norfolk. With the slackness in detail, characteristic of a weak man, he left the arrangement of the matter to his secretary, who entrusted the money and a letter in cipher to a casual burgess of Shrewsbury returning to his city from the Capital. The man's curiosity discovered the nature of the packet he carried, and his discretion conveyed the discovery at once to Cecil.

The paper, when deciphered, told something ; Norfolk's servants taken prisoners, examined separately (each being threatened with the other's admissions), and tortured on the rack, betrayed all they knew. One of them, Higford, had been entrusted with the burning of all letters received from Mary or Leslie. He had treacherously preserved them and now produced them from their hiding-place. The game was up, and even the Bishop of Ross, when threatened with death or the rack, made a full avowal of what had passed between Norfolk and Mary. In the excitement of abject terror the bishop is said to have uttered the wildest calumnies against his mistress calumnies which leave Mary's reputation where it was and only prove the wretched, hysterical stuff the bishop was made of.

"She was," he cried, "unfit for any husband. She poisoned her first husband, consented to the murder of Darnley, brought Bothwell to the field to be murdered, and last of all she pretended marriage with the Duke of Norfolk with whom she would not long have kept faith."

"Lord!" cried Dr Wilson, who conducted the examination, "what a people! and what a queen! and what an ambassador!"

Norfolk made no fight at all. Confronted with the accusation against him, he wept and fell on his knees. At first he was prepared to deny everything, then, seeing that all was known he cried bitterly, "I am undone."

Yet at the end he stood his trial with a simple patience not without dignity. To Elisabeth he wrote a sincere and sorrowful letter commending his children to her kindness. Of the woman who, unseen and unloved, had been the cause of his treason he spoke with a fearful shrinking: "He vows to God that if he had to choose to have that woman in marriage or death, he would rather take this death, that now he is going to, a hundred times."

It is a commonplace, with which dramatic art has made us familiar, that when a man and woman are partners in some secret and unlawful undertaking, it is the woman who knows neither faltering, nor remorse. In this case, indeed, the guilt of Mary and of Norfolk were incommensurate. He was prepared to betray his country, his faith and his sovereign, and to break his plighted word; Mary was carrying on an old and recognised quarrel with the only weapons possible to a captive.

On the eighth of September (1571) she was suddenly confronted by Lord Shrewsbury with letters from Elisabeth. All was known, her efforts to escape, her traffickings with Norfolk and with the King of Spain, all the plans for the Spanish Invasion. At once her household was to be reduced to sixteen, all the rest of her servants were to be dismissed at two hours' notice, the French to France, the Scots to their own country.

Sudden dangers, such as this, always called out

every faculty in Mary, not only her courage and defiance and practical alertness but the greatness and faithfulness of her heart. The accusations she brushed aside either with flat denial or the haughty declaration that she was an independent princess and answerable to no one. At first she looked upon death as inevitable, and the thought of her own death always left her unmoved, but for her servants, her "little flock," she was full of grief and thronging fears. Turned suddenly adrift in a strange and hostile land, how would they fare? With what fate would her faithful Scots meet, returning to a country where their homesteads were unroofed, their names defamed, their enemies in power? About two she was specially concerned, Master John Gordon, a learned young Scottish gentleman who had written in her defence, and Willie Douglas, the boy whose courage and cleverness had contrived her escape from Loch Leven. There is, in her special message to him, a kindness that is both royal and loyal. "As for you, Willie Douglas, be assured that the life you risked for mine shall never be destitute as long as I have a friend alive."

She wrote on behalf of her servants to the French ambassador, to Burghley, to her own ambassador at Paris. The two hours were lengthened into several days, and on the eighteenth she addressed a collective letter to all who were leaving her.

It is difficult to write of this letter. We have grown familiar with Mary in her deep and complicated dissimulation. At this very time she was defiantly denying her own acts, lying without misgiving. Yet who dare say that this letter to the servants, who loved her and whom she loved, is other than heartfelt and sincere? It is noble in its patience, its earnest-

ness, its concern for the souls of those for whom she feels herself responsible. She prays them to be patient, to hold fast the true Catholic faith—knowing that out of the Ark of Noah, there is no salvation—she bids them live in peace with one another, commends them to her kinsfolk in France and begs them to believe that, if she had failed in any way as their mistress it was never from lack of will but only from lack of power. She begs that some of them on arriving in France, will carry her farewell to the old grandmother at Joinville, and sends messages to her special friends, to George Douglas, Lord Fleming, and the good old Archbishop of Glasgow.

For herself she bids them not to sorrow. If her time is come to die her one regret will be that she is unable to reward them better.

The rigours of her captivity increased, her remaining servants might not go beyond the gates nor speak to Lord Shrewsbury's household. She was confined to her own rooms. A horrible contrivance was proposed, a false door by which at any time, by day or night, her jailors might intrude upon her. Once or twice as a concession Lord Shrewsbury took her to walk on the Castle leads, "or in his large dining-room with himself or his wife in her company avoiding all other's talk, either to herself or any of hers." An exhilarating form of exercise!

Her letter to Elisabeth of 29th October has the pathetic dignity of a dying appeal, though there is a sting in the prayer with which it closes that Elisabeth's heart may be acceptable to God and profitable to herself. Looking only for death, Mary makes three requests for herself. She begs for the presence of one of the French Embassy with whom she can

arrange her temporal concerns, her debts and the pensions of her servants. She begs to have a priest who may give her consolation, and finally she begs permission to write a farewell letter to her son.

She asked for bread and they flung her a stone, for fish and they gave her a serpent. A month later she writes in bitter indignation to the French ambassador. The messenger who had carried to Elisabeth her request for a priest brought down instead of the consolations of religion, a book of defamation and calumny by "the Atheist Buchanan." It was of course the notorious "Detectio" in which all the painful and shameful episodes of her life were interwoven with coarse scandals, exaggerations and lewd interpretations.

Sick, defeated, isolated from all counsellors, ignorant even of what was being unravelled, she kept her courage high and her wits sharp and clear.

Elisabeth had evidently sent her a letter detailing all her own good and gracious deeds, her cousin's perfidies and ingratitude, and Mary meets her point by point. Elisabeth was hard put to it when she counted it a virtue that she had refused to accept Mary's crown when offered to her by Mary's subjects. Mary expresses amazement at this, the first news she has had of any such obligation, and wonders if her subjects would acknowledge the facts and insinuates that it would only be of a piece with their later rebellion in which they have had support from Elisabeth. A hit, a palpable hit.

When Elisabeth lays claim to having rescued her life from the vengeance of her own subjects, Mary prefers to attribute her safety to the good offices of the

French king, and points out that on two later occasions Elisabeth was prepared to hand her over to Murray and to Lennox severally, and "God knows how often since." This shaft went nearer the mark than the archer knew.

Her acceptance of the office of godmother to the little prince is another benefit put to her own credit by Elisabeth. Perhaps the honour was the other way is Mary's answer. At least the French king was content to accept it as such, and but for doing Elisabeth honour, her old friend the Spanish Queen would have been a more natural choice.

But the finest stroke is when Mary recalls to Elisabeth three occasions, still held by her in grateful recollection, on which kindness was really shown to her by Elisabeth. The friendly patronage extended to the Guises at Mary's request the year of her return to Scotland; the ring sent with the assurance that it would always be a talisman to secure Elisabeth's support in any time of need; and, thirdly, a certain Parliament where Elisabeth had supported Mary's claim to the succession. Facts that must have made Elisabeth wince.

Lord Shrewsbury was among the Peers who tried the Duke of Norfolk. While he was necessarily absent Sir Ralph Sadler—Mary's earliest acquaintance among Englishmen—took his place. During the days of Norfolk's trial Mary remained shut up in her rooms shrinking from the callous tongues that never spared her reproaches and reflections.

Delight in carrying ill news of any kind belongs to vulgar natures. When the news of Norfolk's condemnation arrived at Sheffield Lady Shrewsbury hurried to Mary's rooms to be the first to tell. But

the tidings had travelled faster than she. She found the queen "all bewept and mourning." "Thereupon," adds Sadler, "the queen became silent and had no will to talk more of the matter." A day or two later he writes again, "she is fallen into great contemplation, fasting and prayer," and he adds a Protestant sneer at the inadequacy of such measures to help the Duke of Norfolk.

One advantage Mary reaped from the rigorous seclusion of the months that followed. She withdrew herself definitely from attendance at the Anglican forms of worship. In her heart she had never wavered in devotion to the Church of her faith, but for political reasons she had given the Church of England a fair hearing. All through one Lenten season preachers from Coventry had preached before her (and sometimes at her), but after hearing them all she had not found two who agreed as to doctrine.

From the date of Norfolk's death onwards she never made the smallest approaches to Anglicanism. More and more, every year, did she identify herself with the cause of the Church. Her sufferings were part of the storm and stress that Church was undergoing for the present in England. Her endless plotting and scheming—with all the lying and dissimulation which they involved—were, she persuaded herself, as much for the cause of God and His Church as for her own freedom and greatness. And undoubtedly this thought did give her constancy and vigour where otherwise even her vitality would have been worn down by years of thwarted and fallacious hopes. In her own inner life, alongside of the restless plotting, there grew up a strange patience. Inasmuch as they came from hostile and powerful

human beings, she would resent her wrongs and fight for revenge up to the last breath with concentrated bitterness, but these same wrongs wore a different aspect when she laid them as a sacrifice on the altar and drew from thence the consolations of religion.

CHAPTER XIX

LIFE AT SHEFFIELD

1572—1580

MARY had written that God alone knew how often Elisabeth had offered to deliver her up into the hands of her enemies.

The most dastardly offer of this kind was made in the autumn of 1572. Scarcely had the disquietude caused by the discovery of the Norfolk plot settled down, when the news of the St Bartholomew Massacre (Aug. 1572) spread panic through the country. Men looked every moment for some Catholic demonstration and, as usual, located the danger at Sheffield. Elisabeth was urged to let the same vengeance fall on Mary that had overtaken Norfolk. Elisabeth had a horror of violence, she shrank from pain, especially from painful decisions. How little pity had to do with her obstinate refusal to take her cousin's life is proved by the cowardly scheme she formed of getting rid of her prisoner without incurring responsibility or dangerous consequences.

In a private Council of herself, Leicester and Burghley, it was resolved to send Killegrew on a secret mission to Scotland. He was to persuade Mar, the Regent, and Morton the virtual ruler, to receive Mary back into her own country and to undertake to have her executed within four hours of her return. To make matters comfortable for Elisabeth, the demand was to

come, as it were, spontaneously from the Scottish side. By September Killegrew was in Scotland. Mar at first made demur—the Erskines had so far kept themselves comparatively clean from blood—but Morton knew no scruples. It was for his interest to get Mary out of the way, he went also on the settled plan of keeping on terms with the Queen of England. But in matters of life and death, as in matters of faith and salvation, Morton's first eye was always on the business aspect. If they were to incur such invidious responsibility, Elisabeth must make it worth their while. Mary must be accompanied by some nobleman of weight, Bedford or Huntington, and by two or three thousand soldiers. These, having witnessed the execution, were then to help in besieging the Castle where Mary's friends still made a stand. The final, most characteristic demand was that Elisabeth should pay all arrears owing to the soldiers of the King's party.

Either Elisabeth found these terms too high or the sudden death of the Regent Mar put a stop to the negotiations, at any rate the scandalous scheme was suffered to drop out. Morton succeeded as Regent. Six months later at the end of May 1573 the Castle fell and with it the last hopes of Mary's party in Scotland.

A few months earlier, with the pitiless levity that served only to emphasise the grimness of the country and epoch, the St Andrews students had entertained Knox with a dramatic representation of the fall of the Castle. Later, on his death-bed, Knox had prophesied concerning his old friend Grange that he should be hung with his face against the sun ; ominous signs, both, of the temper of the people.

A lost cause, a garrison mostly sick, the healthy

remnant mutinous, Lethington so worn with disease that the firing of the guns caused him intolerable anguish, most of Mary's jewels pawned and the exchequer empty; yet even under such conditions, Grange might have held out if English guns from across the Norloch had not battered the Castle walls and set them "running like sand," as Knox had seen them in his vision. To Morton the Captain refused to yield, but from Drury, the English general, he demanded the terms due to honourable foes.

There is a piteous letter written by Lethington and Grange, both proud men, to Cecil, recalling the days of their old intimacy and begging for his intervention. It was all in vain. It suited Elisabeth's policy to hand them over to Morton, and Morton was pitiless. Lethington was saved by timely death, from what he most dreaded, a public execution. So perished miserably for a cause he had betrayed, the finest wit and most enlightened intelligence in Scotland. After the revolting custom of the day his enemies would have kept the dead body unburied till it had been tried and condemned in open court if the heart-broken entreaties of Mary Fleming had not moved Cecil to remonstrate.

Grange had been Morton's friend and had acted by his side in sundry affairs. This was no deterrent to Morton's determination to have him out of the way. He was hung "with his face against the sun" to pacify the clamours of the preachers. History has few tragedies more complete than the fall of the Castle. On June 7th the news reached Sheffield. It added a pang to Mary's sufferings that ill news was always conveyed by those eager to mark how she bore herself under it. "She makes little show of any

grief," wrote Lord Shrewsbury, "and yet it nips her very near."

Her cause in Scotland fell with the fall of the Castle, (May 1573) just as in England it had seemed to fall with the execution of Norfolk. In neither case was Mary's grief mainly selfish. A Scottish nobleman of the time complained bluntly that foreign princes treated their servants like "de vieilles bottes," and we have seen how callously Elisabeth would sacrifice any servant to save her purse or her credit. In this Mary differed from all other princes. She had never lost her affection for Mary Fleming, twelve years later she was eager to have her company and service, and Mary Fleming was equally willing to share her mistress' captivity, but from one cause and another the project came to nothing.

The years that lie between 1573 and 1580, seven tedious years, were to all appearance the quietest and least eventful of Mary's captivity. It seemed as if, for this spell, Europe had agreed to ignore the "daughter of debate" and her claims, each ruler turning to his own particular problem.

Philip of Spain never lost sight of Mary as a weapon for menacing Elisabeth when the time should be ripe for his great enterprise, but Philip's faith in time—"io y el tiempo"—only grew greater as available time shortened. Meantime, with the Turk in the Mediterranean, rebellion growing compact and formidable in the Netherlands, and English gentlemen adventurers harassing Spanish fleets on the high seas and even on the Spanish Main, Philip's hands were full. The Queen of Scots was not forgotten, but she must wait.

Henry III. had succeeded Charles IX. on the

HENRY III, KING OF FRANCE

throne of France, inheriting also the fierce religious strife that was wearing down the life of the country. The friendship of the English queen was essential to the French king, the freedom of his sister-in-law would add nothing either to his strength or security. By a stretch of the old courtesy the French ambassador was enjoined to act for Mary. It was he who, reluctantly, conveyed her letters and messages to Queen Elisabeth, the endless, worrying business of her dowry passed through the embassy, even Mary's numerous shopping commissions seem to have been attended to by the amiable de La Mothe and his successor Castelnan de Mauvissière.

For a time Mary ceased to struggle with Elisabeth. Instead of letters of angry remonstrance, where mother-wit steeped in gall scored point after point against her correspondent, we have now letters—more painful to read—of patient resignation and plaintive appeals.

As the years slipped on and small indulgences were granted her and increased benignity in Elisabeth's letters gave Mary hopes of winning her cousin's favour, she began to shower gifts on the English Queen. French confections were presented in her name by the French ambassador. Mary set her uncle the Cardinal's wits to work to find suitable devices and mottoes which, engraved on ornaments after the sentimental fashion of the day, might convey her feelings towards her cousin. She had a feminine genius for millinery and invented and executed miracles of lace and gauze and needlework. Presents of sleeves, head-dresses and ruffles were sent to court as propitiatory offerings. Elisabeth was as greedy over a ruffle as over a revenue, yet she

had some twinges of shame in accepting so much and giving nothing in return. With humorous effrontery she bade the ambassador warn her young cousin that as people grew old they accepted with two hands and gave with one finger.

In no point is the contrast between the cousins greater than in this matter of giving. Elisabeth provided so illiberally for Mary's expenses that Shrewsbury was always out of pocket. At one stroke she reduced his monthly allowance from £120 to £80, and while she impoverished the poor, faithful gentleman, she fretted him into nervous fevers by her constant suspicions.

By instinct, even more than by policy, Mary was open-handed and considerate. On one occasion there was some confusion about an apothecary's bill. She wrote promptly to the French ambassador bidding him settle it without dispute. She would, she said, rather pay twice over than defraud the poor man or distress him with unjust suspicions. Her open hand and frank courtesy won her everywhere friends and servants. Guard her as closely as he might, Shrewsbury was at all times uneasily aware of letters and messages passing from hand to hand, finding their way to and from the prisoner for whom he was responsible.

Mary's usual abode was at Sheffield Castle, a lordly dwelling lying in nine miles of richly wooded park. Just beyond the Castle gates lay the busy, thriving little town, and in it many idle or daring spirits open to a bribe or ready for an adventure. In vain Shrewsbury tried to keep Mary's people from contact with the outer world. A main danger seems to have been the laundresses. It was characteristic

of the time that while embroiderers—male and female—were an integral part of all great households, the washing was either given out or laundresses came in to their work and returned at night to their homes. Linen baskets offered admirable hiding-places for letters or other parcels and, if we are to believe Lord Shrewsbury and Sir Amyas Paulet, washerwomen were a venal class.

A curious lot of servants and messengers Mary had in her service. We read of one Kynlough, "a learned man or conjuror," Caldwell a schoolmaster, a glover also and a porter who had their rendezvous at the house of an ale-brewer, Staining Lane, London. There was also "a Thames waterman with a squint" who was Morgan's man and conveyed letters between London and the Scottish Queen.

This Morgan, a Welshman, had been Shrewsbury's secretary in the early days of Mary's captivity, but had been dismissed on suspicion of dealing with her. He settled in Paris ostensibly to manage the business of her dowry; later on we shall find him deep in all the plots of Guise and Spain. He was her chief agent and had her entire confidence. Another of Shrewsbury's servants, the tutor of his boys, managed his services to the Queen so discreetly that for two years his master refused to admit any suspicion of him.

Seven years they were of deadly monotony. Occasional changes of abode were necessary. When Mary's rooms at the Castle required to be "sweetened"—and in those insanitary days, spring cleanings were even more imperative than in our times of smoke and gas—she was removed to the Manor. This was a house lying on the edge of a high tableland about two miles from the Castle, commanding wide open views

of beautiful hill country. But to one constantly restrained in the house and only allowed exercise under restrictions, fine air and open country are but Tantalus' gifts.

Mary's health was always ailing. Rheumatism and an affection of the liver added the weight of depression to her other sorrows. Every year Elisabeth gave reluctant permission to her cousin to visit the spa at Buxton, and then in agitation tried to recall or limit it. Such were the outward changes of Mary's life.

Inside, the days passed dully enough. "We live here the life of a convent," she wrote once to her uncle. Prayers and the offices of the Church occupied much of the time. She was concerned to keep alive the religious life of her household. Sometimes a chaplain was vouchsafed to her: once, when there was a difficulty about this, a devoted priest in disguise obtained a situation as a gardener at the Castle. When plots and persecutions were toward, she was always deprived of her priest. In view of such times she had secretly obtained from Rome the extraordinary privilege of partaking of the consecrated elements at her own hand.

In 1577 a shadowy little romance broke the monotony of life in Mary's household. Five beautiful Maries had been young together, had danced and sung and laughed, and turned the heads and won the hearts of their lovers. In 1577 they were barely what we now consider middle-aged, but the best of life was over for all. Mary Fleming, a widow and in poverty, had joined, with her children, the sad restless company of Catholic exiles at Louvain. Mary Livingston's husband, John Semple, had been persecuted by

Morton on account of his faithful stewardship of Mary's jewels. Of Mary Beaton we only know that she was alive in 1578 and that she died before her husband Ogilvy of Boyne. And now in sober, middle-aged guise, love came to Mary Seton, the last of the five.

The Beaton's were among the most loyal of Mary's friends. A brother of the Archbishop passed constantly between Paris and Sheffield entrusted with all her confidential affairs. Early in 1577, this faithful Andrew Beaton proposed for the hand of Mary Seton. The lady was reluctant. Mary had first to talk her out of some religious scruples concerning a vow she had made, and then to laugh her out of a characteristically Scottish difficulty. Andrew Beaton was only a younger son, and at the best it was doubtful if a Beaton were a quite equal match for a daughter of the House of Seton. It was not put to the proof. On his next journey back from Paris, Andrew fell ill on the road and died in an inn. A couple of years before Mary's death, Mary Seton left her mistress and may have adopted the religious life.

Amusements were scanty at Sheffield and pathetically mild for a woman like Mary. As an occasional indulgence Shrewsbury took her hawking in his beautiful park, but this might at any moment bring an angry rebuke on him. Life had to be arranged for indoors. "Besides reading and working I take pleasure only in all the little animals I can get." She had Barbary fowls in wooden cages, and small birds and "pretty little dogs" sent from France.

It is more touching to hear that the practically childless, rapidly aging woman almost adopted a small grandchild of Lady Shrewsbury. Little Bessie

Pierrepoint seems to have shared the Queen's room from the time she was four years' old. It was an interest to the Queen to train up the little creature in courtly breeding and accomplishment, "bringing her up as carefully and as virtuously as if she had been my own daughter." She took a simple, motherly pleasure in superintending her frocks. Sentences like the following in one of her letters to "ma mie," "my well-beloved bed-fellow, Bess Pierrepoint," have an amusingly familiar ring. "I shall cause your black dress to be made and sent to you as soon as I have the trimming for which I have written to London."

The adoption of Lady Shrewsbury's grandchild, and the further fact that Mary stood sponsor to a Talbot grandchild born in the Castle, are proofs that however rigidly Lord Shrewsbury might stick to his rôle of jailor, there must have been considerable intimacy between Mary and Bess of Hardwick. The furious quarrel between the ladies some eight or nine years later is in itself an argument of this.

Lady Shrewsbury had permission to spend long mornings with the Queen, both ladies busy over their embroidery frames. Court gossip and spicy stories of Queen Elisabeth enlivened their conversation. Through Lady Shrewsbury reassuring messages reached Mary even from men in high favour at court. After all, nothing could alter the facts that she was next heir to the crown, and that not the most fulsome of courtiers could attribute immortality to Gloriana. Even her minion, Christopher Hatton, sent Mary a message, that as soon as Elisabeth was dead he would ride down to Sheffield, and escort her to London.

It seems to have been with Mary's approval that

the ambitious countess contrived and carried out—in defiance of Elisabeth's known dislike to matrimony—a marriage between one of her daughters and Charles Stuart, Darnley's brother. After the usual storm of Elisabeth's indignation had rolled over their heads, the young couple would have settled down happily, for it was a love match and the lady of a sweet disposition, but death removed first the young husband, and a year or two later, the wife. The little orphaned daughter, Arabella, was to inherit all the ill-hap that attended her race.

The marriage of Charles Stuart and Elisabeth Cavendish had probably been the occasion of a sort of reconciliation between Mary and Lady Lennox. Before she died the old countess certainly affected to believe in her daughter-in-law's innocence of her husband's murder.

If proofs of her innocence of that almost forgotten crime could have helped Mary, a document was sent from Denmark, May 1576, purporting to be a confession of Bothwell, in which he cleared the Queen of all participation in the crime and laid the blame heavily on Murray and the Protestant lords. Bothwell's mind had been unhinged before he died at the end of seven long years of captivity. Moreover the document is of doubtful authenticity and seems to have had little or no effect on public opinion at the time.

The chief interest of the episode is the effect it had on the poor, shrinking soul of little ten-year-old King James. Sticklers as were his tutors for the Levitical Law, one gentle precept they had scrupulously disregarded. They had been careful to seethe the kid in the mother's milk. From the pulpit, in the very prayers of the Church the mother's shame had

been rubbed into the sensitive soul of the child. Tulliebardine had got hold of this confession of Bothwell's and mentioned it inadvertently in the boy's presence; eagerly the child asked to see the document. So dull of heart was Tulliebardine that he could not account for the high spirits the boy was in all the rest of the day, and wrung from him the explanation that the knowledge of his mother's innocence had lifted a weight from his heart.

Four or five years later when James was a reigning king and treated on all hands as a grown man, the old suffering from these ugly tales was still acute. The rough kind-heartedness of a simple man, Lord Hunsdon's courier, Cuddy Armour, had opened his heart and James complained with tears of the vulgar gibe that called him "the son of Signor Davie."

There had been room for many changes in Mary's world during the seven dull years at Sheffield. Even in her own household there were important changes. In 1574 Raulet, Mary's secretary, lay dying, unable to manage her correspondence, but so resentful if any one else wrote for her that, with her usual considerateness, she did most of her writing with her own hand. In his place, a certain young Frenchman, Nau by name, was sent to her in the following year. A partisan of the Guises and with his own fortune to make, he plunged with zeal into all Mary's plots and schemes. From chance remarks in her letters, it is clear that Mary recognised the selfish and quarrelsome nature of the man, but she had confidence in his ability and his final faithlessness was a painful shock to her. It was to this Nau that Mary related minutely the circumstances of her life between the Riccio murder and the flight from Loch Leven. Untrust-

SHEFFIELD MANOR

worthy as a record of facts, Nau's history is interesting as a revelation of Mary's mind. The passion for Bothwell had perished as though it had never been, but the resentment against Darnley was as fresh as though his sins against her were of yesterday.

In the larger world there were more momentous changes. In 1574 the Cardinal of Lorraine died. He had acted a selfish part by his niece. In the matter of her dowry he had neglected and mismanaged her business even if he were guiltless of malversation. By various expressions in her letters, it is plain that Mary was under no delusions as to his character, yet, when he died, she remembered nothing but the fact that he had fathered her youth. "Alas!" she wrote, "I am a prisoner and God has taken from me the one of all his creatures whom I most loved. . . . I had no need to be told of this event, as I had a frightful dream from which I awoke fully convinced of that which was subsequently confirmed." Several years later, the old Duchess Antoinette died full of years, of fulfilled ambitions and of heart-breaking disappointments. The headship of the family now devolved on Mary's cousin the young Duke of Guise, Duke Francis' son, who, from a wound in his face, was proud to bear the title of the younger "Balafré."

Like the earlier generation of Guises, this young man was haunted by dreams of founding a royal dynasty and with one diseased and childless Valois succeeding the other on the throne—while the next heir was a pronounced Huguenot—there was room in France for ambitious dreaming. To this end Guise cultivated assiduously the hereditary popularity of his family with the Parisian mob; to this end he plunged recklessly into debt; to this end he—the son

of the conqueror of Metz and Calais—intrigued with the enemy of his country, becoming a pensioner of Philip, and bound to the interests of Spain; to this end he remembered that he had a cousin, next heir to the throne of England, the centre of Catholic hopes and devotion. He was to be a chief actor in the great Catholic and Spanish plots of the closing years of Mary's life.

The first of these plots hardly touched Mary personally. She knew of it but had nothing to do with its planning, indeed it never took definite nor practical shape.

There was perhaps only one man in Europe who in position, person, heroic quality and romantic charm was Mary's equal, Philip's bastard brother, Don John of Austria. A writer of romance must needs have brought the two together though a continent and a wilderness of monsters had divided them.

Their very appearance declared them made for each other. Don John's spare, upright figure, nobly poised head and dark Spanish face would have matched the beauty of Mary in her youth. When de Tassis—the Spanish ambassador at Paris—wrote that Don John's "bright and vivacious eyes were winning all hearts," and when another writer describes his "Circe-like charm over the minds of men," one cannot but be reminded of early days at Holyrood and the "enchantment whereby men are bewitched."

Don John was the son of a king, but at the same time an adventurer eager to carve out with his sword a kingdom of his own; he was a child of the Church as loyal and devout as Mary herself. If the two had actually been united in a place of power they might have plunged Europe back for generations

DON JOHN OF AUSTRIA

into tyranny and obscurantism, so irresistible would have been their force, so united their aims!

In 1577 Don John was appointed Governor of the Netherlands. At Rome he had found the Pope full of a scheme by which Don John should suddenly carry his Spanish soldiers across the sea, make a descent on England, deliver Mary and re-establish the Catholic faith. English exiles at the Roman court, weary of inaction and sick for home, pledged themselves that the Catholics in England would eagerly co-operate with him. On his way to the Netherlands, Don John went disguised to Paris and there, in a secret interview, discussed the scheme with the Duke of Guise, the head of "our house" as Mary fondly called her mother's family. Both young men were ardent for the enterprise.

But the reconquering or reconciliation of the Netherlands was a task beyond even the genius and spirit of the hero of Lepanto. It was no part of Philip's scheme that his brother should be too successful. Straitened for money, ill-supplied with soldiers, worn out by a wasting fever caught in the camp—if indeed more sinister agents were not at work—Don John died at the end of two years leaving his task almost unattempted. "Tout avec le temps," he had said, finger on lip and smiling mysteriously when some one had told him of the straitness and hopelessness of Mary's imprisonment. But alas! Time was his conqueror and the lady looked in vain for her deliverer.

CHAPTER XX

CATHOLIC PLOTS

1580—1583

MARY was not old as we count age. In 1580 she was not more than thirty-eight, but time and trouble had dealt hardly with her. Her hair was gray, her health so broken that she spent half her time in bed, rheumatism had so crippled her limbs that she had at times to be carried about the grounds in a Sedan chair.

Much of her sufferings were what we should now recognise as nervous. She was specially apt to have crises at the times when Elisabeth was renewing the weary old farce of negotiating terms for setting her cousin at liberty. When accredited ministers were at Sheffield, lights would be put out in the Queen's rooms, voices lowered, and agitated attendants would give anxious reports of the patient. The Shrewsburys were sceptical about these attacks, but of Mary's frequent suffering and discomfort there can be no doubt.

In moments of lassitude and deep despondency she craved for mere liberty that she might live at peace and concern herself with her salvation. The wonder is rather that such moods were rare and only half genuine.

Not only was she broken in health, but so shameless had been the peculation and malversation in

the business of her dowry, that in 1583 her income had dwindled from £12,000 a year to £1200—and money is the mainspring of conspiracy. She was cut off from all counsel, news reached her only intermittently and she had no security that her letters would reach her correspondents. Yet for six more years this extraordinary woman kept the principal governments in Europe poised between peace and war, and at last drove the strong and settled government of England into the crime of executing her simply from fear of what she could effect.

That room at Sheffield where the lights, burning late into the night, showed Mary and her secretaries busy with her correspondence, was the centre of a network whose secret and complicated threads reached to Paris, to Madrid, to Rome, to the Spanish Embassy in London, to the English seminary at Rheims, to country manor houses in England and to weather-beaten towers across the Border.

The Catholic reaction was in full flood. The positive, aggressive, heroic spirit had passed from the reforming over to the conservative Church. The society of Jesus, disciplined to face any difficulty, ardent to brave any danger, was setting itself to reconquer the world for the Church. In 1580 a chivalrous band of young English priests trained abroad set themselves to the glorious task of bringing back their country to the obedience of Rome. In various disguises they rode about the country; Pious ladies in country houses received them to their own peril. These priests celebrated the mass and heard confessions in quiet corners. Many well-born youths, who, like Francis Throckmorton and Antony Babington, were halting between the claims of their

faith and the allurements of a worldly career, were won by the fervour and heroism of these young priests.

If to this enthusiastic Catholic party the English government was schismatic and Elisabeth an illegitimate and excommunicated usurper, Mary appeared the rightful heir and a martyr for the Catholic faith. She was to them an ideal figure, a type of the suffering Church. A year or two later one of them wrote of her as "the only saint I know living on earth." To the exalted imagination of these missionaries the whole country seemed ripe for rebellion. The national life of the English people was a fact too large and obvious for them to perceive, the life of the contented masses who bought and sold and laboured and blessed the Queen who loved her country and kept it in peace and prosperity.

The English government saw the danger of all this missionary zeal and met it with a persecution as searching — though not as sanguinary — as that carried on in Catholic countries. But to ardent spirits, such as Edmund Campian, martyrdom was a goal in itself; to the astute heads of the order of Jesus, martyrdoms were the most effective means of spreading the faith. To stay the sympathetic excitement which accompanied these executions, the government was careful to profess that they punished political treason not religious persuasions.

All Catholic interests, from the mere charitable care of poor prisoners in the Tower, to the subversion of the throne, found a centre at the Spanish Embassy. Of all the notable men sent as ambassadors by Spain to England Bernardino Mendoza is the most striking figure. He was a typical Spaniard; so devout a

Catholic that it was said of him that "he was confessed, shriven and holy-watered" before every audience with Elisabeth and her Council; so conscious of his blue blood and high breeding that he distinctly despised the English court and thought Elisabeth vulgar. His grip of affairs, small and great, his sources of information, his power of vivid and forcible writing are alike amazing. He had spies in Elisabeth's very bedchamber. He gives every detail of her preposterous and hypocritical love affair with the poor little Duke of Alençon, the third of Mary's brothers-in-law, who aspired to the hand of Elisabeth. It is to Mendoza we owe the story of Elisabeth flinging her shoe at Walsingham's head and calling him "Knave" and "Puritan." He adds the comment "she often behaves in this rude manner."

He must also have had a correspondent at the Scottish court, so closely did he follow the shifting movements there. For in the complicated game of European politics Scotland was again taking a part. The subserviency to England which had been Morton's steady policy had come to an end. In 1580 James, a boy of fourteen, was a reigning sovereign, and the various powers were awaking to the fact of his importance.

Brought up between Morton and George Buchanan and shrinking in fear and hatred from both, James early developed a power of duplicity that astonished that veteran deceiver, Elisabeth. In reaction from the austerity of his upbringing he had a passion for pleasure and a habit of levity which delivered him into the hands of any one who could keep him amused. His intellect, naturally subtle, had been early stimulated and was a source of infinite conceit to

him. His vanity as a theologian was to turn out, at a crisis, a stronger bulwark of the Protestant faith than the warmest personal piety would have been.

In the five last eventful years of her life, her son's character was one of the stubborn facts that Mary had to reckon with. Mary had more than once offered to Philip to have her son placed in his hands to be brought up a Catholic, without however suggesting how so chimerical a plan could be carried out. More practical was the plan of her kinsman the Duke of Guise. If James were not to become his mother's most formidable rival he must be won over to adopt her cause and, if possible, her religion. To this end he dispatched to Scotland, James' cousin on the father's side, the seigneur d'Aubigny (Sept. 1581). Mary disliked the project, she had rooted mistrust of the false, selfish Lennox blood. She recalled the incident of her own childhood when old Lennox had betrayed the cause of France for Henry VIII.'s gold.

D'Aubigny, though lacking both character and courage, had every art of pleasing. When he saw the difficulty of altering James' religious views, he cunningly professed to be converted to Protestantism by the arguments of the youthful Solomon.

The next step necessary was the overthrow of Morton. For this the Frenchman's courage and influence were insufficient. But another favourite of the king's, James Stewart [a son of Lord Ochiltree and—oddly enough—a brother-in-law of John Knox]. possessed the qualities for that characteristic Scotch crime, murder with a show of legality. On the last day of the year 1580, the useful old accusation of being art and part in the murder of Darnley was, for the last

THE EARL OF MORTON

again, brought into play. That hungry grave of Darnley had called for many atoning victims; two more and the tale would be complete.

When she learned the fate impending over Morton, Elisabeth raged and threatened but only two arguments would have carried weight, heavy bribes or an army marching across the Border, and these costly measures Elisabeth would only employ at the last extremity. In Scotland, no "banded" noblemen, no faithful kinsmen rose to defeat the ends of justice on Morton's behalf. His greed, pride and cruelty had left him isolated in a world rejoicing at his fall.

It was a strange age, when lives of reckless and ignoble passions ended in deaths of deliberate nobility. Morton laid down his pride of place and power, his hoards of ill-gotten wealth as if he were weary of them. He claimed the grace of God as his predestined, inalienable heritage, and died not without sombre grandeur. He was one of the few enemies left who had brought her to shame on Carberry Hill, and Mary rejoiced unrestrainedly in his fall and death.

The French government, seeing the way open for regaining their old influence in Scotland, proposed to send an ambassador to James, without however withdrawing the countenance they still affected to show his mother. To make her son an ally and a strength to her claims became a first object to Mary: to keep mother and son separate and to play one against the other was a new motive for Elisabeth. She renewed the old meaningless negotiations with her cousin; while Mary proposed to James an "Act of Association" by which her son was to admit her rightful possession of the crown and she, in turn, promised to re-transmit it to him.

If he remained a Protestant and an ally of Elisabeth's this Association offered no advantages to James, if he identified himself with his mother it would secure him the enthusiastic support of that extended and complicated Catholic conspiracy which was daily taking more definite body and form. It was primarily a religious, even an ecclesiastical plot. Philip and the Pope were, it was confidently hoped, at the back of it with troops and money.

In Paris Mary had only too many agents. Guise, deeply engaged to Spain, was yet most reluctant to arouse the suspicion of his own government. Archbishop Beaton, Mary's faithful old servant, was too conservative to trust to any other alliance than the French, the other Scotsmen took the same view. Beaton was jealous of the younger and newer men, and so anxious to keep matters in his own hands that Mary complained half humorously, half bitterly, that he wished to keep even her out of her own affairs altogether. Of Mary's other friends Morgan was whole-heartedly Spanish, so were Dr Allen, head of the Seminary at Rheims, and the other priestly plotters.

Early in 1582 Jesuits were sent to Scotland to report on the feeling in the country. The sight of tumbled-down churches quickened their pious zeal; the social standing to which Morton's policy had reduced the ministers moved their contempt. They stayed with Catholic noblemen like Eglintoun and Seton, saw in the country only what they wished to see and totally failed to gauge the compact power of Church and people. On one point only they did not delude themselves. Father Crichton admitted that he had small hopes of the King's conversion. Vanity

and his own habitual arguments bound James to the faith of his upbringing, but from political reasons he was ready to welcome the support of Spain. The Catholic nobles declared that if James' convictions stood in the way, they would not hesitate to depose him or carry him off abroad.

D'Aubigny was as ardent and as unpractical as the priests themselves. He wrote to Mary that he desired nothing more than to fight in her cause. But his conditions were exacting. He sent them clearly formulated to the conspirators in Paris. He was to have 20,000 men by the autumn with pay for eighteen months and was himself to be in supreme command. Father Crichton, with no better authority than his own hopeful spirit, lightly promised that his demands should be acceded to. The ardour, confidence and officiousness of these holy men would have wrecked a less complicated plot. In the spring of 1582 they were back in France, and sent Mendoza an eager message inviting him to meet them at Rouen. "The good men say this as if I could do such a thing," he writes half amused and wholly provoked at their simplicity. They called everybody into Council at once, Morgan, Guise, Beaton and Dr Allen, confided everything as completely to de Tassis, the Spanish ambassador in Paris, as they did to Mendoza, to the latter's extreme irritation. Then one good Father bustled off to Rome to consult the Pope and the other to Madrid to stir up Philip.

Mary and Mendoza clearly recognised each other as the only two capable persons concerned in the plot. Their attitude of mind towards their priestly allies was identical. "These good people may blunder seriously unless they have wise counsel and advice,"

Mary wrote anxiously. In similar words Mendoza complains, "The priests though ardently zealous, cannot be trusted with matters of state unless taught word by word what to say."

In April 1582, Mary begs Mendoza to take the management of the whole affair; in writing to Philip Mendoza describes Mary as virtually the mainspring of the plot.

Cardinal Granvella was living in retirement in Spain; there much of the king's correspondence passed through his hands. He was struck by the ability of Mary's suggestions. "She must have some very intelligent person near her who writes her letters. . . . It is impossible to lay down with greater clearness the lines upon which the affair should be conducted, the support that will be necessary and the kind of force required."

Skilful plans, pious zeal, golden opportunity, all knocked at Philip's door in vain. He would not stir till all his plans were completed, till he and his ally "el Tiempo" were at one. It was his purpose, from which he never faltered, to crush Elisabeth, conquer England, and restore it to the Faith. It was never part of his plan that Mary Stuart and her son should benefit by his labours. Two years later, in 1584, when he let another opportunity slip of accomplishing the pious enterprise, Sir Francis Englefield, a Catholic exile who looked after Mary's interests at Madrid, wrote to him, "If she perish, as is to be feared, it cannot fail to bring some scandal and reproach upon your Majesty because, as your Majesty is, after her, the nearest Catholic heir* of the blood

* Philip's claim was remote, based on his descent from a daughter of John of Gaunt.

PHILIP II, KING OF SPAIN

royal of England, some false suspicion might naturally be roused at your having abandoned the good Queen." This "false suspicion" commends itself very naturally to the student of history.

While Philip held back from the Catholic plot, a Protestant plot in Scotland, favoured and financed by the English government and sanctioned by the Kirk, had suddenly kidnapped James while the guest of Lord Ruthven, clapped Arran into prison—James' favourite, Captain James Stuart, had been raised to the Earldom of Arran—and driven the panic-stricken d'Aubigny into the stronghold of Dumbarton.

Brave and practical always, Mary, on hearing of this sudden check to her plans, wrote to Guise urging that French troops might at once be poured into Dumbarton. Her letter fell neatly into the hands of Francis Walsingham, Secretary of State. This Francis Walsingham was the most tenacious and dangerous of all Mary's enemies. As good a Protestant as Burghley, he dreaded above all things a Catholic successor on the throne. Elisabeth might call him names, ruin him in unrepaid expenses, fling her slipper at his head and thwart him at every turn, he toiled unremittingly in her service; nay, in that service, lent himself to mean and treacherous devices. He had spies everywhere, even in Catholic seminaries; in the Tower renegade priests purchased their lives at his hands by worming themselves into the confidence of genuine sufferers. At this very time, the clerk at the French Embassy, entrusted to copy out Mary's ciphered letters, was in his pay and sent him deciphered copies.

As usual, it was by the tightening of her imprisonment that Mary knew that something was

discovered. She was always greatest when she was indignant. On the 8th November 1582 she wrote to Elisabeth. The letter is autograph, and beautifully written in her fair, Renaissance handwriting. The support afforded by the Queen of England to the rebels who had kidnapped her son was but another move, she declared, in the treacherous and unneighbourly game Elisabeth had played with her from the beginning. She arraigned her cousin before the judgment seat of God and bade her consider the succession of wrongs she had inflicted on her nearest kinswoman. No point in the indictment was false or even strained. Elisabeth had again and again supported Mary's rebellious subjects against her, she had allured her into England by the promise of assistance, she had kept her in prison against all law and justice. The right to be heard in her own defence, vouchsafed to the meanest criminal, was denied to the next heir to the throne. That title, Mary added bitterly, was the real cause of the injustice. She was treated not as a state prisoner but as a slave whose life might be sacrificed at any moment to the caprice of her enemies. This was a fact not to be gainsaid. The letter would have been stronger if Mary had been content to put Elisabeth in the wrong and leave it alone. But she was ill, sick with disappointment, and galled by the rigours of her captivity. At the end she breaks down in passionate pleading. "I beg you, madame, for the sake of the sorrowful passion of our Saviour and Redeemer to allow me to retire from this kingdom to some place of peace where I may comfort this poor body, worn out by so many troubles and, in freedom of conscience, prepare my soul for God who daily calls for it."

Just as the traveller, lost in some featureless waste, finds with dismay that he has come round again upon his own traces, so the student of this period, wearied and bewildered, finds himself facing again and again the same set of conditions. In the spring of 1583 Elisabeth was renewing the stereotyped negotiations, but these had ceased to delude Mary. By the equally delusive hopes from Spain she was constantly buoyed up to her undoing.

In the spring James, under the influence of the English party among his nobles, had leaned to alliance with Elisabeth and had shown plainly that his mother's continued captivity would be no inconvenience to him. In June he effected his escape from his enemies, by his own good wits, as he was careful to inform all other princes, and was making servile advances to Guise and the Pope. But as Philip wrote, speaking from the Catholic point of view, "his liberation was not much cause for rejoicing."

Guise was busy all that summer, imploring the Pope for money and Philip for men. This time England was to be the point attacked: the Catholic nobles were to be ready to rise at the first signal. It was the old situation of the Northern Rising over again. All that autumn Guise looked for the sails of that Spanish fleet which was not to cross the sea till Time, his old ally, had betrayed the King of Spain, and the opportunity so often offered was irreparably lost.

A new and sinister element, born of impatience and disappointment, had crept into the plots. Convinced that England was Catholic at heart, and the Queen and her ministers the only strength of Protestantism, the plotters raised the question whether

the murder of an excommunicated usurper might not be a righteous act. Priests boldly justified it from the pulpit. A Catholic gentleman Somerville, crazed with vanity, was arrested in the autumn of 1583 for boasting of his intention to murder the Queen, and drew others down in his ruin. Walsingham's attention was aroused, his spies set on the trail, and a young Catholic gentleman, of position, a nephew of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, arrested. He was deep in the secret of the Spanish plot. Mendoza was anxious to see how he would stand the rack, having small confidence in an Englishman's powers of endurance. Three times did gallant young Throckmorton endure the torture, but when threatened a fourth time he gave way. The names of the conspirators, the list of landing places, the Queen's complicity in the plots, all the important facts were drawn out of him with no reserves. Then he broke down and sobbed that he had betrayed the dearest Queen on earth.

The most important result of these discoveries was that Mendoza was turned out of the country. He left with passionate threats. He had failed to please Elisabeth as a minister of peace, he would satisfy her, he vowed, as a minister of war. He became Spanish ambassador at Paris and gratified his desire to be revenged on Elisabeth by fostering all the plots started against her.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

1584—1585

IN the spring of 1584, a new and agitating personal trouble distracted Mary's thoughts from her constant preoccupation with conspiracy. We have seen the footing she was on with Lady Shrewsbury, we may suspect that it was even more intimate than appears. But with the growth of the Lennox grandchild, Arabella Stuart, new ambitions, hostile to Mary, were taking hold of the grandmother.

In December 1582, Leicester had proposed a marriage between his son and little Arabella—the Dudleys, like the Guises, were always haunted by the vision of a crown. We have Mary's word that Lady Shrewsbury's ambition for her grandchild was the origin of the quarrel. But there were other elements in it. Bess of Hardwick had quarrelled with her husband—chiefly about money—and perhaps wished to hit both him and the Scottish Queen with one stone.

An ultra-Protestant neighbour, one Topcliffe, seeking a handle against any suspected of Catholic leanings, started the scandal that Lord Shrewsbury had been too intimate with his charge and that she had borne him a child. Lady Shrewsbury had laughed with the Queen at the atrocious slander.

But after a time, being desirous to pick a quarrel with her guest, she took up the report, and she and her two sons spread it everywhere. The misery and wrath this caused Mary swept from her mind everything beyond the desire of being revenged on her former friend. For a time indeed she restrained herself from making revelations. She valued her own reputation for loyalty and feared to alienate other serviceable friends, but we have seen how, once or twice before in her life, she sacrificed the long results of self-restraint for the infinite relief of pouring out the gall and fury that oppressed her heart. She was sick, disheartened, deserted, she may have felt that she might as well lose everything by one great stroke of vengeance against two women who had cruelly wronged her. She wrote a letter to Elisabeth which, for calculated malice and relentless plainness of speech, has probably no parallel in correspondence. She repeats all the idle and highly spiced gossip Lady Shrewsbury was in the habit of imparting to her, as if she were doing a friendly act to her cousin. Lady Shrewsbury's tales are too much after the taste of her own day to be quotable in ours. In her recitals the lightness and indecorum of Elisabeth's conduct with Leicester, Hatton, Alençon and his gentleman-in-waiting, Simier, have taken gross and monstrous form. Equally nettling and more mortifying—if it had ever reached Elisabeth's eye—is the picture of her credulous vanity and vulgar violence. Lady Shrewsbury was in the habit of mimicking her royal mistress for the amusement of Mary's ladies. She would quote the fulsome flatteries offered to Elisabeth by her courtiers, and describe how she and Lady Lennox would not catch each other's

eye for fear of bursting into laughter. There were stories, too, of broken fingers and cut hands among the maids of honour. Mary ended her accusations, though not without signs of being a little ashamed, with an account of the homage Lady Shrewsbury and her daughter, Lady Talbot, had offered her personally.

The letter is like an impish flame suddenly darting up from a witch's cauldron, luridly illuminating and distorting the figures of the three ladies standing round it. Had it reached Elisabeth she would have been almost justified in the eye of posterity for taking her correspondent's life. The letter—a beautifully written autograph—lies among the Hatfield papers. Perhaps the prudence of Burghley arrested it. It is more probable that Mary, having eased her bosom of this perilous stuff, laid it aside where it was found with her other papers when her drawers were rifled, two years later at Chartley.

Lady Shrewsbury and her sons were forced to make public acknowledgment of their faults. Probably the incident hastened if it did not cause Mary's removal out of the hands of Lord Shrewsbury. The much-enduring but irritable earl received a new office which would necessarily take him much from home. When he kissed Elisabeth's hands on his appointment, he thanked her for freeing him from two she-devils.

For years Mary had dreaded this change of keeper. She had a haunting fear of poison or secret violence, and believed that either might be her fate if she fell into the hands of Huntingdon or any other follower of the unprincipled Earl of Leicester. But when the change actually came she acquiesced in it hopefully. She was removed to Wingfield, as ample and pleasant

a dwelling as any she had ever occupied; the servants were chosen from the familiar household at Sheffield; her jailor, Sir Ralph Sadler, if not easily won to sympathy, was a just and honourable gentleman. Mary believed that the change was a preliminary to a modified liberty with residence in England.

Her hopes of help from abroad were at the lowest. There had been a change of Popes. Guise had thoughts and ambitions for nothing but the Holy League of which he was the head; Philip gave no sign; the very priests in exile were disheartened and were resigning themselves to merely spiritual activity. Nothing remained for Mary but to make such terms as she could for herself.

The danger of plots and assassination had driven the English government to an extreme measure. An "Association" was drawn up in September (1584) and signed with enthusiasm by nobles and magistrates. This bound all Englishmen to prosecute to the death such as should conspire against the Queen, and declared also that all, on whose behalf such a conspiracy was made, were *ipso facto* deprived of any right they might claim to the succession, a measure aimed pointedly at the Queen of Scots. Mary was now reckless in the concessions she was prepared to make, she went the length of promising to sign, herself, the Bond of Association, though she knew and was prepared for the fact that this treaty would cut her off from her foreign allies and alienate Catholic sympathies. As an earnest of sincerity she wrote to the Archbishop of Glasgow to bid Guise and her other friends stop plotting on her behalf.

Every year was adding to the political importance of James; henceforth he had to be included as a

third party in every negotiation between the two Queens. To Mary this seemed to add strength to her position. Like other indifferent parents, she had a simple faith in the unquenchable instinct of filial affection. In the spring of 1584 she had said confidently to Waad, one of Elisabeth's commissioners, "I know the child doth love me and will not deal with the Queen without my advice." She believed, or rather took for granted, that her son had gratefully accepted the proposed Act of Association with her, though it had neither been confirmed by Parliament nor published to the world. Alas! benefactions are differently regarded by donors and recipients. To Mary the legal status confirmed to her son by the Act of Association and the alliance of *her* friends and kinsfolk, the Catholic powers, seemed inestimable boons. To James, a ruler *de facto* from infancy, the advantages seemed shadowy, while the possibility that a headstrong, capable, Catholic woman (practically a stranger) might claim a share in his government, offered serious inconveniences.

Arran, the omnipotent favourite, was in bad repute with the Catholics. He suddenly persuaded James to form the closest alliance with England to the exclusion of all foreign powers. James was not merely prepared to abandon his mother but to buy the Queen of England's favour by a complete revelation of the plots of the past five years.

When Mary learned that her son's ambassador to the English court was to be the young Master of Gray, she was at first reassured, she knew him as a young man devoted to her interests. A year or two earlier he had been in the Duke of Guise's household. Old Beaton, confident in the good faith of a "Brother

Scot," had initiated him far more than Morgan thought prudent into the secrets of the Catholic plot. He had been in correspondence with Mary herself. On hearing of his coming to London, she warmly commended him to the French ambassador.

It is difficult to understand how the figure of Patrick, Master of Gray has—up till quite recently—escaped the hands of the historical romance writer. He could step without alteration into a novel of Louis Stevenson. He was of singular beauty and possessed many graces and accomplishments including the cultivation of romantic friendship characteristic of the time. He had the grace to covet, and the charm to win the affection of Sir Philip Sidney, the purest spirit of the age, while at the same time treachery and cold-hearted cruelty were as instinctive with him as attractive manners and free and forcible utterance.

A letter from him to Mary after his arrival in London is one of the saddest landmarks in her history. It marks the fact that she was no longer of any account, and might be neglected and insulted with impunity.

At this time Mary had, as ambassador at the Scottish court, Fontenay, a brother of Nau. Both these Frenchmen were clever, talkative, self-important men, probably underbred and certainly offensive to the Scottish and English noblemen with whom they had to do business. To Fontenay Mary had written uneasily of rumours which had reached her of Gray's intended defection. The letter arrived before the Master's departure south. Fontenay showed it to James and he, knowing no reticence with any of his favourites, showed it at once to Gray.

Gray in writing to the Queen showed all the

irritation of an injured school-boy. He accounted himself ungratefully used and evil-requited, and swore that while he lived he would not meddle with her service again "even if it might advantage me ten millions of money." He sneers at her majesty's employing such a fantastic creature as Fontenay as her ambassador; advises her, with insolent patronage, to "follow some quiet, calm, and solid course," and "to take with the Queen of England some honest, friendly and quiet dress."

It took weeks of waiting to force on Mary the suspicion that her son was deliberately separating her interests from his own. She vehemently entreated the French ambassador to go to Scotland or to send a Scottish Commissioner to her. She wrote to Burghley and to Elisabeth begging to have her letters sent on to her son. There is a pitiful little fragment of a letter to James on the 5th January [1585] "I never heard of any difficulty you had raised before so that Gray's conduct seems to me horribly strange, I never imagined that either you whom I love so much, nor he who had given so many assurances of his service, could have tried to gain advantage by this treaty at my cost."

Gray carried his embassy to the desired issue. James repudiated the "Act of Association," and deserted his mother for vague promises of the succession, a pension of five thousand a year—cut down afterwards to four—and a gift of six couple of bloodhounds. "The king's mind did so run on these" that their delay nearly upset the negotiations. As Mary had said in the first hour of his birth, he was only "too much" Darnley's son. The dark, silent days brought to Mary the slow conviction that what she

refused to believe was only too true. Fortunately for herself the passion of indignation was always stronger with her than the meaner instinct of self-pity. She wrote to the French ambassador requiring him to withhold the title of king from James. "A mother's curse shall light upon him, I will deprive him of all the greatness to which through me he can pretend in the world. He shall have nothing but what he inherits from his father. No punishment human or divine will be adequate to such enormous ingratitude."

She went a step further in her concessions to Elisabeth. She offered to renounce all pretensions to the English succession alike for herself and her posterity. Of this last offer no notice was taken, but such new rigours were shown in her treatment that, looking back on the long and painful years at Sheffield, they must have seemed, in comparison, a time of ease and liberty.

TUTBURY CASTLE

CHAPTER XXII

THE BABINGTON CONSPIRACY

January 1585—September 1586

IN the dead of the winter—January 1585—when Mary's hopes were lowest and her anxieties most acute, Sir Ralph Sadler received orders to remove his charge to Tutbury. (The double courts and extensive buildings at Wingfield made it a difficult and expensive place to defend.) Of Tutbury Mary had nightmare recollections. It had been the scene of her first imprisonment sixteen years previously; a favourite lady-in-waiting, Mademoiselle Rallay, had died there; so great had the discomfort been on the earlier visit that the Shrewsbury household could only endure it for a month or two at a time. During the intervening years, the draughty, sunless rooms had stood vacant, plaster was falling from the walls, neither hasty repairs, nor the furniture brought from Lord Paget's forfeited house in the neighbourhood, could remove the clammy chill that clung to flagged floors and dilapidated walls. Household stuff was inadequate, the linen sent down by Elisabeth was so worn and coarse that Mary's servants refused to use it. Faithful servants are capable of great sacrifices but they are rarely prepared to endure small discomforts. Many of Mary's household desired to throw up their posts, but from lack of passports were forced to stay on, reluctant and complaining.

The friendly servants of Lord Shrewsbury had been left at Wingfield. Mary realised how hostile and how acridly Protestant a household she had fallen into when, from her window, she saw Sir Ralph Sadler's servants roughly tormenting a young Catholic gentleman who was kept a prisoner in close proximity to the Queen. One morning when she looked out she saw him hanging from his window. Probably misery had driven the poor wretch to suicide, but it quickened in the Queen her constant terror of sudden violence.

In April matters grew worse when Sir Ralph Sadler, urging his age as a reason, gave up the distasteful office of Mary's keeper.

Of his successor, Sir Amyas Paulet, Mary had heard much from her friends in France where he had been English ambassador for several years. She knew him to be a Protestant of the kind which was beginning to be called "Puritan," and as one bitterly opposed to her claims. There is no need to go to his enemies for an account of Amyas Paulet; they could not draw a more repellent portrait of the man, than we gather from his own numerous letters.

It is difficult to imagine Shrewsbury, and far less Sir Francis Knollys, lending themselves to the cold-blooded plot by which Walsingham decoyed Mary to her ruin, but Paulet played his part in it, not only with sanctimonious satisfaction in the ends, but with a sort of hard pleasure in the means. A solemn, dull man, he waxes jocose when he describes her physical sufferings or impotent bursts of indignation. Duty appealed most to his conscience in the form of thwarting his charge.

A day or two after Sir Ralph's departure he tore down the cloth of state in the dining-hall, declaring

that as Mary was so much confined to her own room, these insignia of royalty were unnecessary and unsuitable. He put a sudden stop to the liberal distribution of alms which she caused to be made in the neighbouring little town. She belonged to a church which teaches that the prayers of the poor are the wealth of the faithful, and in days of sickness and depression the thought of these humble bedesmen had been a comfort to her, but Paulet was convinced that the only chance of safety lay in cutting off the Queen and her household from all human fellowship. His religious zeal was eager to get rid of one of Mary's servants whom his instinct had "smelled out" to be a priest, but on this point Elisabeth would give him no authority. Incorruptible he was and, it would seem, that Mary recognised this, and never tried to bribe him with hopes of advancement at her accession as Morgan had advised her to do. A notable householder, he entered with zeal into Elisabeth's plans for reducing expenditure, so that Mary was constrained at last to complain to the French ambassador of the quality of the food supplied to her.

A succession of French ambassadors had been, *ex officio*, helpful and courteous friends to Mary without lending themselves to plots against Queen Elisabeth. Her special friend Castelnan de Mauvissière was in this summer recalled, and when, in August, Monsieur de Chateauneuf took his place, Mary was suddenly informed that this, her one approved mode of communication with the outside world, was to be closed and that henceforth her letters, to her kinsfolk, her son, her ambassador in Paris and her men of business, were all to go through the hands of Walsingham.

It was, as we shall see, part of Walsingham's

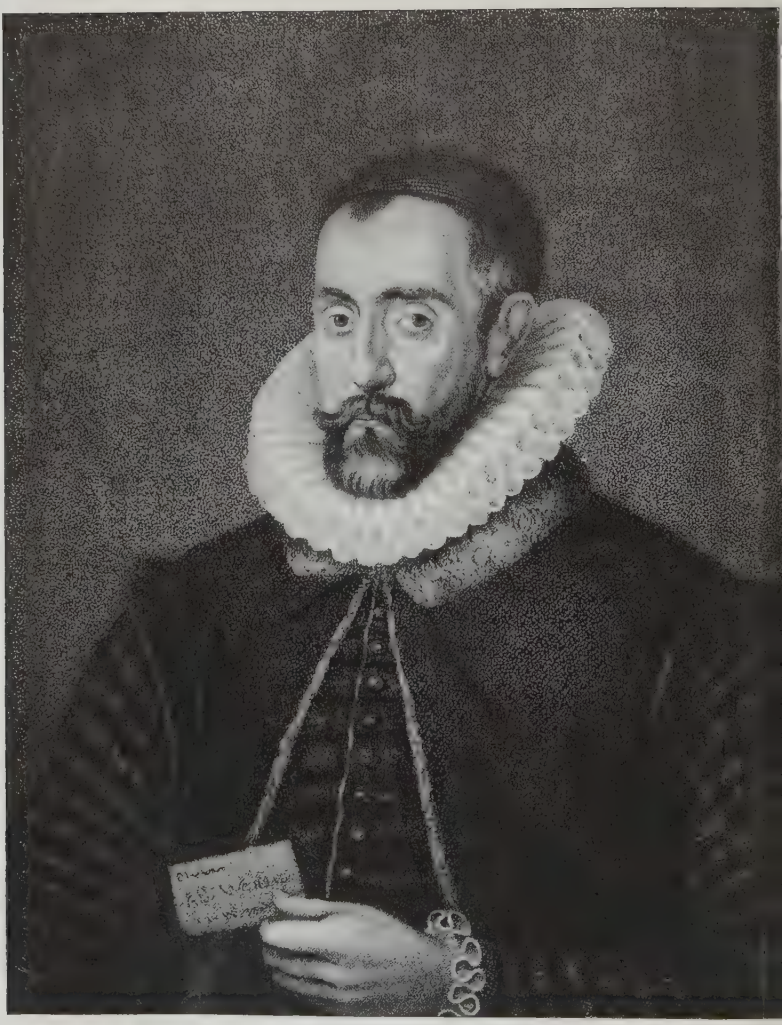
scheme for reducing Mary to desperation. Almost simultaneously with this disconcerting arrangement, Mary learned the *rapprochement* between her son and Elisabeth. In her helpless anger she began to nurse the chimerical idea that she might, if James persisted in his heresy, cut him off from all the rights he inherited through her and transfer them to Philip of Spain. A document to this effect was found in the following year among her papers at Chartley.

In total ignorance of what was passing in the great world outside, her life seemed to be narrowing down to a round of physical suffering and petty annoyances at Tutbury. In this mood she probably wrote these mournful verses, so different in their sombre reality from the conventional, melodious, little elegy on her first husband's death.

> "Que suis-je, hélas et à quoi sert ma vie?
> Je ne suis fors qu'un corps privé de cœur,
> Un ombre vain, un objet de malheur
> Qui n'a plus rien que de mourir envie.
> . . . . . .
> Et vous, amis, qui m'avez tenu chère
> Souvenez-vous que sans heur, sans santé
> Je ne sçaurais aucune bonne œuvre faire
> Souhaitez donc fin de calamité."

Having cut her off from all communication with the outer world, her enemies might have ceased to dread her as a danger to the Commonwealth. But nothing could alter the facts that she was the next heir to the throne and that a majority of the English nobility would prefer her right to that of James or any other claimant. Though Elisabeth steadily refused to face the fact of her own mortality, Walsingham was perfectly alive to what would happen at her death.

To secure the accession of a Protestant sovereign



SIR FRANCIS WALSINGHAM

the Catholic heir-apparent must be got out of the way at all costs. A case must be made out against Mary that would bring her within reach of the Bond of Association, she must be proved accessory to a plot against the life of Elisabeth.

Such plots were being hatched continually. The idea of regicide had become fatally familiar among the Catholic conspirators in France. More than one wrong-headed enthusiast like Parry or Savage had come to England with murderous intention. But either opportunity was lacking, or they were overawed by the serene courage of Elisabeth, who would allow no precautions to be taken.

A large body of habitual plotters necessarily counts a certain number of traitors in their ranks. Amongst the Catholic exiles almost all were cut off from any means of livelihood except what could be wrung from Mary's slender means or the uncertain liberality of the Spanish king. Poverty and opportunity furnished Walsingham with a competent selection of spies drawn from Catholic and a few even from priestly ranks. Among these was a certain Gilbert Gifford. His family was creditably known for its devotion and suffering in the Catholic cause. He was in deacon's orders and had been brought up from boyhood in the seminary at Rheims. His name and his intimate knowledge of all that concerned the Church were sufficient credentials among English Catholics. He had quick parts, extraordinary flexibility and that entire absence of heart and conscience which an exclusively religious upbringing produces in an irreligious nature. He was well known to Morgan, Paget, Mendoza and Mary's other friends in Paris. When, in the spring of 1585, he offered his services

to Walsingham, he must have seemed the very instrument the Secretary was in search of. Another of Walsingham's creatures, a man Phelipps, had a special, highly developed knack of making out ciphers. At one time he had offered his services to Morgan who had mentioned his name to Mary. Through these men Walsingham was determined that a way should be opened by which Mary could communicate with her friends. Elisabeth was, from the first, privy to the plan, though one is glad to believe that Burghley was not consulted.

All summer Mary had complained of the squalor of her lodging at Tutbury, hardly expecting her complaints to be attended to, but, in September, her guardian was ordered to inspect various houses in the neighbourhood. One was actually the family home of the Giffords. It was rejected, but Chartley the adjoining property was chosen. The house was roomy and well built, surrounded by a moat and easy to defend. The place and neighbourhood were thoroughly familiar to Gifford ; he could come and go with less suspicion. From previous knowledge of the townsfolk he could select an agent among the baser sort in the neighbouring town of Burton. This agent he found in the brewer who weekly supplied beer to the Scottish household at Chartley.

In the middle of January [1586] a hint was conveyed to Nau to watch the next barrel that should be delivered. In it was found a water-tight box and in that a ciphered letter from the faithful Morgan, the first communication from her friends that had reached Mary for months. The letter, dated the previous October, was entirely in recommendation of the bearer Gifford to whose skill and faithfulness Morgan declared

that Mary could safely commit her correspondence. She acted in this confidence, and all her letters passed at once into Walsingham's hands.

To her it was a new spring of life. The great, living world with its friendly powers, its secret combinations, its exhilarating possibilities, were hers again, and all her dormant energies rose up fully alive. She accepted Gifford's credentials without misgiving, showered rewards with a lavish hand on him and on "the honest man" (the cant name by which Paulet and Walsingham refer to the brewer), and on every subordinate messenger. For months her correspondence had been accumulating at the French embassy. By Gifford's contrivance, a large packet of letters was conveyed in succeeding barrels. Soon Mary and her secretaries were vigorously at work, weaving the old web of intrigue with Spain and Guise and the Catholic nobility both of Scotland and England.

The hopes from Spain, though they were to prove mirage to Mary, were of course founded on the reasonable grounds that Philip's vast preparations were already well known. She put herself at once into touch with Mendoza, informed him of her intention of transferring all her rights to his master and begged that he would take her under his protection. The Catholics in Scotland had compacted themselves into a party; she wrote to Lord Claude Hamilton appointing him her lieutenant, and planning a rising in Scotland to be simultaneous with the Spanish invasion of England. So far it was the familiar, hopeful and hopeless old game. But the letters that kept pouring in during the spring (1586) brought new elements into the plot.

To Mendoza, Paget and Morgan, the desperate remedy of regicide seemed the only effectual policy; the casuistry and fanaticism of certain priests at Rheims added a halo of religious heroism to the deed. Early in 1586 a soldier, Savage by name, had been stirred up by Gifford's brother—a sincere Catholic—to undertake the deed and was in England watching for his opportunity. About the same time, a priest called Ballard, after consultation with Mendoza, Paget and Morgan, arrived in England with a more organised plan for the same object. A few days later he fell in with a young Catholic gentleman of fashion, Antony Babington.

Four miles across the uplands from Wingfield, lay the Manor house of Dethick, the home of the ancient family of Babington. The family was Catholic and the mother a devout woman. On his father's death in 1571 Antony, a boy of ten, became the ward of Lord Shrewsbury. Young gentlemen of quality, in those days, usually received the better part of their training as pages in the house of some great nobleman. It is probable that Antony passed a year or two at Sheffield Castle at the impressionable age. He may there have given his young devotion, as Willie Douglas did at the same age, to the tall, sorrowful woman with the haunting eyes and winning grace of manner.

Later he went to London and was well received at court. In the midst of a career of pleasure, there came upon him the religious quickening inspired by the preaching and death of Campian. With other young men of the same way of thinking he formed a Catholic league and was for some time in correspondence with Mary and her agents.

His associates in London, courtiers and young men of fashion, shared also his religious faith and his political hopes. Among them, several were members of Elisabeth's household, all were frequenters of her presence; but in a society where promotion went by court favour there must always have been a number of disappointed or impatient men, restless, selfish spirits eager to welcome any change.

Religious zeal, vanity, boyish romance, the fascination of a secret combination, and the contagion of the sterner enthusiasm of men like Savage and Ballard carried those poor lads beyond all bounds of prudence and conscience. At the end of May they had a complete scheme to submit to Mendoza who, with hearty approbation, forwarded it to Philip, urging his support of a work "so christian just and advantageous to your majesty."

The plot had three distinct objects, the old plan of a Catholic rising to synchronise with a Spanish invasion. The prelude was to be a dash on Chartley to rescue the Queen and simultaneously, the assassination of her rival. Six gentlemen, of whom Savage was one, volunteered for the more dangerous task, Babington was himself, with ten other gentlemen, to head the body of horsemen who were to deliver the Queen of Scots.

Prudence on the part of the conspirators should have kept Mary in entire ignorance of the darker aspects of the plot, but they were accustomed to look to her as to the brain and will controlling all their actions. Morgan hesitated, indeed, to mix her up with a desperate man like Ballard, "a priest well disposed for your majesty's service, at present following matters of consequence, the issue of which is uncertain." But

his exultation breaks out unguardedly in his postscript to Curle, "I am not unoccupied, although I be in prison, to think of her majesty's state and yours which endure with her; *and there be many means in hand to remove the beast that troubleth all the world.*"

About the same date Morgan urged Mary to reopen communication with Babington. On June 25th she wrote him a gracious little note encouraging him to write to her. All letters, both written by her or to her, passed through Walsingham's hands. Through his secret agents he knew also every movement of Babington and his excitable young following. Gifford, that impenetrable traitor, was so deep in their counsels that it was he and not Ballard who, early in August, communicated the completed scheme to Mendoza.

Alert and vigilant, Walsingham's secret service concentrated all attention now on Mary and Babington. On the sixth of July Babington wrote his fatal letter to his "very dear sovereign." He explained the plans for the invasion, for her rescue and for the assassination, and he begged her to assure the six gentlemen who were to undertake the "tragic execution" of honourable recompense "either of themselves if they survived or in their posterity."

The prey was almost in Walsingham's grasp. To obviate all risk of delay or miscarriage, his decipherer Phellipps, was sent down to Chartley while Babington's letter reached Mary through the usual channel.

Quite unconscious of her danger Mary noted a stranger saluting her smilingly as she drove past. She learned his name and, wondering vaguely if he were the man Morgan had once mentioned to her, wrote this description of him, "He is of low stature, slender every way, dark, yellow-haired on the head

and clear yellow-bearded, pitted in the face with smallpox, short-sighted and, as it appears, about forty years of age." There is something horridly suggestive of a weasel about this description, and there was something of the cold-blooded cruelty of the animal in the man's nature. Eagerly Paulet and Phellipps lifted the return packet from the barrel and tore it open. But they found merely letters to Lord Claude and to the French ambassador, and a short note to Babington promising a full reply by the next opportunity. "We attend her very heart in the next," wrote Phellipps to Walsingham.

It was indeed all "her heart" they found and all her brain, the buoyancy that after so many disappointments could rise responsive to a new hope, and the politic energy that could provide for all practical points. She suggested three alternative plans for her own rescue, urged secrecy, expedition, a careful leaning on Spain and—further?

This letter to Babington has been the subject of a controversy almost as voluminous and heated as that which has raged round the Casket Letters. As it stands in the decipher made by Phellipps at Chartley [and neither the original sent to Babington nor any draught prepared by Mary for her secretaries was ever found] the letter accepts the fact of the assassination without a tremor, and arranges in a business-like way for messengers on swift horses who are to convey the news to her deliverers before it can reach her jailors.

Both Tytler and Prince Labanoff have made out a good case for a forgery, and to them the curious in such matters must be referred. It is perfectly credible that the passage in Mary's letter explicitly discussing the plan for the assassination may have been inserted

by Phellipps; for the age was unscrupulous and Walsingham required definite evidence. But that Mary knew and approved of the plan is proved by a sentence in a letter from Mendoza to Philip written in the following September, "I believe the Queen of Scots to be acquainted with the whole affair from a letter she has written to me." That letter Mendoza, it would appear, did not forward to Philip, at least it has not been found at Simancas.

If Mary's consent to the murder be a crass fact, not to be got over, it is of small use to condemn her or to apologise for her. She was fighting in a life and death struggle. "Mors Elisabethæ vita Mariæ, vita Mariæ mors Elisabethæ," so Mendoza had summed up the case some years previously. The Bond of Association had infinitely increased the danger on Mary's side. If judge her we must, let it be by the standard of an age when Knox applauded the murders of Beaton and Riccio, and Elisabeth and her ministers were disappointed that the Scots Lords had failed to make away with Arran and d'Aubigny.

Walsingham had secured what he wanted. It was now time to put a stop to the plot and to scatter the plotters, lest in a sudden access of resolution they should really make an attempt on Elisabeth's life.

Ballard was the first whom it was proposed to seize. He had as many doublings as a hare and gave his pursuers considerable trouble. Babington became alarmed; in an agony of uncertainty, he fled from London one day and braved Walsingham in his office the next. On August 3rd he wrote an agitated letter to Mary entreating her for the love of God not to give way to discouragement. "It is an enterprise honourable before God. We have vowed it

and we will carry it into effect or it shall cost us our lives."

Poor boys! they had vowed and vapoured, taken sacraments and pledged toasts, but when it began to look like business, they had little stomach for the deed. They tried to egg each other on to the point of appearing at court but their hearts failed and distractedly they scattered and fled. A night or two was spent sleeping out in the bosky solitudes of St John's wood; a hospitable Catholic household at Harrow offered an asylum for the night to one or two of the fugitives (their host afterwards atoned for his tender-heartedness on the scaffold). One after the other they were caught, and within a few days all were lodged in the Tower.

What Walsingham required was more written evidence, evidence in Mary's own hand. If the slightest suspicion reached Chartley all documents would be destroyed; it was necessary to take her and her secretaries at unawares.

Her new hopes had put new life into Mary. In pleading for more liberty she had often urged that the weakness of her body made escape impracticable; now she was eager to persuade her friends that, as of old, she was fit for rapid riding and long endurance. At this time she wrote to Morgan, "I can still use my crossbow against a deer and gallop after the hounds."

On the eighth of August Paulet invited her and all her household to hunt in Sir Walter Ashton's park at a few miles' distance. She was attended by both her secretaries, Andrew Melville the master of her household (the third of three loyal brothers), Bourgoign her physician and other attendants.

Just outside the park gate they were suddenly

joined by a body of horsemen. What wild hopes may have surged up in Mary's heart of the expected rescue party or what dread of renewed rigours may have chilled her spirit is merely a matter of speculation to the picturesque historian.

Riding up, Sir Amyas Paulet introduced the Queen of England's messenger Sir Thomas Gorges. Briefly but unmistakably his message was delivered: the plot was discovered, the proofs of it were in Elisabeth's hands, the Queen of Scots' servants were involved and must at once be removed, Sir Amyas would tell her the rest.

As always Mary's instinct was for resistance; she called on her servants to defend her. What could peaceful gentlemen, with crossbows and riding wands, effect against Paulet's armed escort? She broke into passionate, impotent invective but, undisturbed, some of the party proceeded to secure Nau and Curle while Waad and others galloped back to Chartley to search for the papers, and Sir Amyas Paulet led the rest of the party off in an opposite direction.

Mary dismounted and refused to go any further; quite unmoved, Sir Amyas offered to send for her coach. She yielded at last because she was powerless. In the account preserved for us by Bourgoign, her physician, he describes her as retiring behind a tree and making a touching and eloquent prayer. It may have been so, for the habit of devotion was strong in Mary and the vision of a crown of martyrdom in place of an earthly crown may have begun already to haunt her imagination. But the incident does not persuade one of its genuineness and it is easier to think of her riding to Tixall, fierce, stricken, and with death in her soul.

The horrible fortnight that ensued was strangely like the first weeks of her imprisonment at Loch Leven. She was in an unknown house, among strangers, shut up in one small apartment. Two of her women, an equerry, and her apothecary were alone allowed to visit her. No provision seems to have been made for a change of clothes. It is painful to think of the length and silence of those July days. She was kept in total ignorance of the proceedings against her; no one came even to reproach or accuse her; she was not allowed the use of pen or ink. In an unending feverish round she must have gone over the chances in her favour, tortured herself to remember what papers had, and what had not, been destroyed, weighed with lessening confidence the probability of her secretaries remaining staunch, or snatched at some mad hope of a sudden intervention from Spain.

Can one grudge her the consolation she drew from the persuasion that she was suffering for the sake of her religion, that her faithfulness to her Church was the cause of her enemies' persecution?

If only to soften the bald agony of it all, one would gladly, if one dared, place in those blank days at Tixall the composition of a prayer which tradition has always attributed to Mary.*

"O Domine Deus speravi in te
O care mi Jesu nunc libera me
In dura catena
In misera pœna
Adoro, imploro
Ut liberes me."

* Unfortunately the authority for this beautiful verse can be traced no further than the eighteenth century; the same century which produced another poem attributed to Mary, "Adieu charmant pays de France."

Elisabeth had entered into all the arrangements for springing the trap upon her prisoner. One can forgive her more easily for acts of harshness than for the callousness of her message to Paulet "bidding him write unto her the whole story of those things done in this matter, to the Queen of Scots. Not for any other cause *but that her Majesty might take pleasure in the reading thereof.*"

She probably also "took pleasure" in handling the jewels and objects of bric-a-brac which were brought from Chartley, the list of which is candidly endorsed "Goods stolen from the Queen of Scots." In a letter written to "Amyas, my most faithful and careful subject," she sent a message to that "wicked murderess" who had fallen so horribly, "far passing a woman's thought, much less a prince's." She urges her "to repent lest the fiend possess her and so her better part be lost, which I pray (*i.e.* for her repentance) with hands uplifted to Him that may both save and spill." It is well to carry this letter in one's mind, when one comes to consider a later communication of Elisabeth to her "faithful Amyas."

On August 26th Mary was brought back to Chartley. As she rode away from Tixall a crowd of beggars hung about the gate. "I have nothing to give you," she cried with tears, "I am a beggar as well as you, all is taken from me."

Her first act on arriving at Chartley was characteristic of the warm-hearted woman whom all her servants adored as a mistress. The shock of her husband's arrest had caused Curle's wife to be prematurely confined. Mary went at once to visit the anxious young wife and said, in her queenly way, that whatever accusation was brought against Curle, she would take

it all upon herself. The baby, a little girl, was alive. Mary's priest had been removed, Sir Amyas gladly seizing the opportunity for dismissing him, nor would he even admit an Anglican clergyman to perform the rite of baptism. Mary, herself, taking the little one on her knees sprinkled the water on its face saying, "Mary, I baptise thee in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." She was but fulfilling a tender provision of the Church for securing baptism for the frailest of her little ones, but to Sir Amyas, looking on sourly, she seemed "to make no conscience of breaking all laws of God and man."

Meanwhile the trial of the conspirators had been proceeding with little of resolution or heroism on the one side and no glimmering of mercy on the other. In the Tower Babington had been confronted with Phellipp's decipher both of his own letter to Mary and of her long one in reply. He admitted the authenticity of both, but under what compulsion and terror of torture, we do not know.

On the seventeenth of September, he and six of his fellow-conspirators were put to death with circumstances, which prove that "stern English common sense," as Mr Froude calls it, had nothing to learn from Spain in refinement of cruelty. But the English appetite for cruelty, if keen, was quickly surfeited. Next day when seven more were executed Elisabeth forbade all prolongation of suffering.

There remained Curle and Nau and a third under-secretary, Pasquier, who had joined them. They were imprisoned in Walsingham's household, and between threats of torture and promises of life and liberty, their minds were so enervated that as early as September 3rd, Walsingham wrote of them, "Both

Curle and Nau are determined to throw the burden on their mistress."

No minute of Mary's letter to Babington either French or English could be found at Chartley to Walsingham's great annoyance, "I would to God these minutes were found," he wrote. It was the weak link in his chain of evidence. All that was found were certain notes in Nau's writing in which he referred to "un coup" which *might* be taken to mean the attempt on Elisabeth. Step by step and with many shufflings, both Secretaries were brought to attest that the deciphers of the Babington letter and of Mary's fatal reply were "the same or similar to what they had written and ciphered." To remove all blame from themselves they had been careful to explain that all letters were dictated by Mary and were again revised by her after they had been written and translated.

One more act of petty tyranny Mary had to endure before she was removed from Chartley. She was sick in bed, when one morning Sir Amyas appeared accompanied by a strange gentleman, and turning all her attendants out of the room, said that he had received orders to remove all her money lest she should attempt to corrupt his servants. In vain she refused to yield the keys of her cabinet, her impassive jailor called for bars to prise the doors open. To stay further extremities, the unfortunate lady slipped out of bed, opened her cabinet and handed over a canvas bag where she kept a little hoard to provide for her servants against the day of her death.

Considerable sums were found in the private room of Secretary Nau. Many knew his epicurean nature

when she wrote bitterly of him and Pasquier. "Ils sont gens qui veulent vivre en tous mondes s'ils peuvent avoir leurs commodités."

On September the 25th, Mary was removed to Fotheringay.

CHAPTER XXIII

FOTHERINGAY

11th October 1586—4th February 1587

AT every turn Mary was to be a perplexity to her enemies and not least in their moment of triumph. "I see this wicked creature ordained of God to punish our sins and unthankfulness, for her Majesty hath no power to proceed against her as her own safety requireth," wrote Walsingham with pious irritation.

Elisabeth's private message to Mary urging her to acknowledge her guilt and throw herself on her cousin's mercy had been met, on Mary's part, with a contemptuous refusal to prejudice her case. Even if she had had any faith in the practical advantages of such a course, she was in no mood to humble herself. Life in a prison, straiter and more humiliating than any she had yet known, might indeed chill her soul, but on the other hand her imagination had accustomed itself to dwell nobly and with a certain exultation on the thought of death, death in the sight of Europe, death for the cause of God and the Church, death that would forever put her enemies in the wrong.

It was in this tense mood of defiance that she met the Commission sent down to Fotheringay to try her cause. Forty lords and gentlemen, the greatest men in the kingdom, attended by some 2000 armed horsemen—for the times were dangerous—arrived at

Fotheringay on Saturday 11th October. That evening a copy of the Commission was delivered to Mary. She scanned the list eagerly, seeking in vain for one friendly or impartial name.

The Commission was composed of the earls and barons of the Privy Council, of six judges, and two doctors of Civil Law; forty-two in all, the finest wits, the most experienced heads, the most honourable names in England. Among the noblemen were various whose correspondence with Mary had been discovered at Chartley. Elisabeth had generously burnt their letters, but their uncertainty of their own position effectually precluded their showing any kindness to Mary. Walsingham, Crofts, Bromley and Burghley were open enemies; the fact that Leicester and Hatton had had secret dealings with Mary made them but the more dangerous. Old Sir Ralph Sadler was on the Commission to judge the woman he had seen as a baby; more soft-hearted, Lord Shrewsbury had urged illness as a reason for staying away.

Mary had always had the quickest instinct for spying out a weak point. She noticed that the statute under which she was to be tried was that brand-new Bond of Association framed purposely against her barely two years before. This statute gave power to prosecute and condemn to death any one laying claim to the English crown or trying to deprive Elisabeth of the same by way of conspiracy or foreign invasion. Mary had not only forced the English government to frame laws especially against her; before they could obtain a verdict they had to nullify the ordinary procedure of justice.

Elisabeth had a fatal habit of putting herself in the wrong by small meannesses and discourtesies;

the letter delivered to Mary, peremptorily ordering her to submit herself to the judgment of the Commission, was addressed baldly "To the Scottish."

Mary met the command by a flat refusal. As a queen, she could not allow herself to be judged by subjects without betraying the prerogative of her son, of her descendants, of all princes everywhere. She would not acknowledge herself subject to the laws of a country where she had been kept in prison in defiance of law. Finally, she would not plead in a court where she was deprived of an advocate, of her papers, even of time to prepare her own case.

Her refusal was taken down, submitted to her and forwarded to Elisabeth.

All the next day (a Sunday) was spent in receiving formal deputations from the Commissioners and arguing from point to point; one quick witted woman keeping at bay forty trained and experienced men, men who, moreover, knew her to be guilty of the charge brought against her.

Again she urged her immunity as a queen, and declared that as a stranger she was not subject to laws that had afforded her no protection. She sharply criticised their new law which offered no precedent by which she could guide herself; she demanded to be judged by true Civil Law, with consultation of foreign jurisconsults or to be heard before a free Parliament. At other times, breaking out into eloquent speech, she made bitter reflections on Elisabeth's claim of having afforded her protection, warned her judges that the theatre of the world was wider than England or, taking refuge in her last stronghold, expressed her willingness to shed her blood in the cause of her religion.

The October dusk was falling and Burghley's patience was wearing out when that child of the world, Christopher Hatton, brought an argument to bear that made Mary pause. The Queen of England, he assured her, was only too anxious that she should establish her innocence. If she refused to be questioned by the Commission she would give the world cause to believe her guilty, her honour would suffer nothing by her submission. Burghley added the practical argument that in her absence, as in her presence, the Commission would proceed with the case.

Late that evening a courier arrived post-haste from Elisabeth. The letter to Mary was no less peremptory than the former had been, but the final sentence held out a gleam of hope. "But answer fully and you will receive the greater favour from us."

During the wakeful hours of the night, Mary came to a decision. Elisabeth's message may have had something to do with it, for an instinctive clinging to life underlies our most heroic resolutions. Hatton's words weighed more, for, above all things, Mary desired to convince the world that, if she were condemned, it was for no crime of her own, but on account of her religion and her nearness to the throne. Stronger than all reasoning was the passionate desire to speak her heart out in ears that, at last, must give her a hearing.

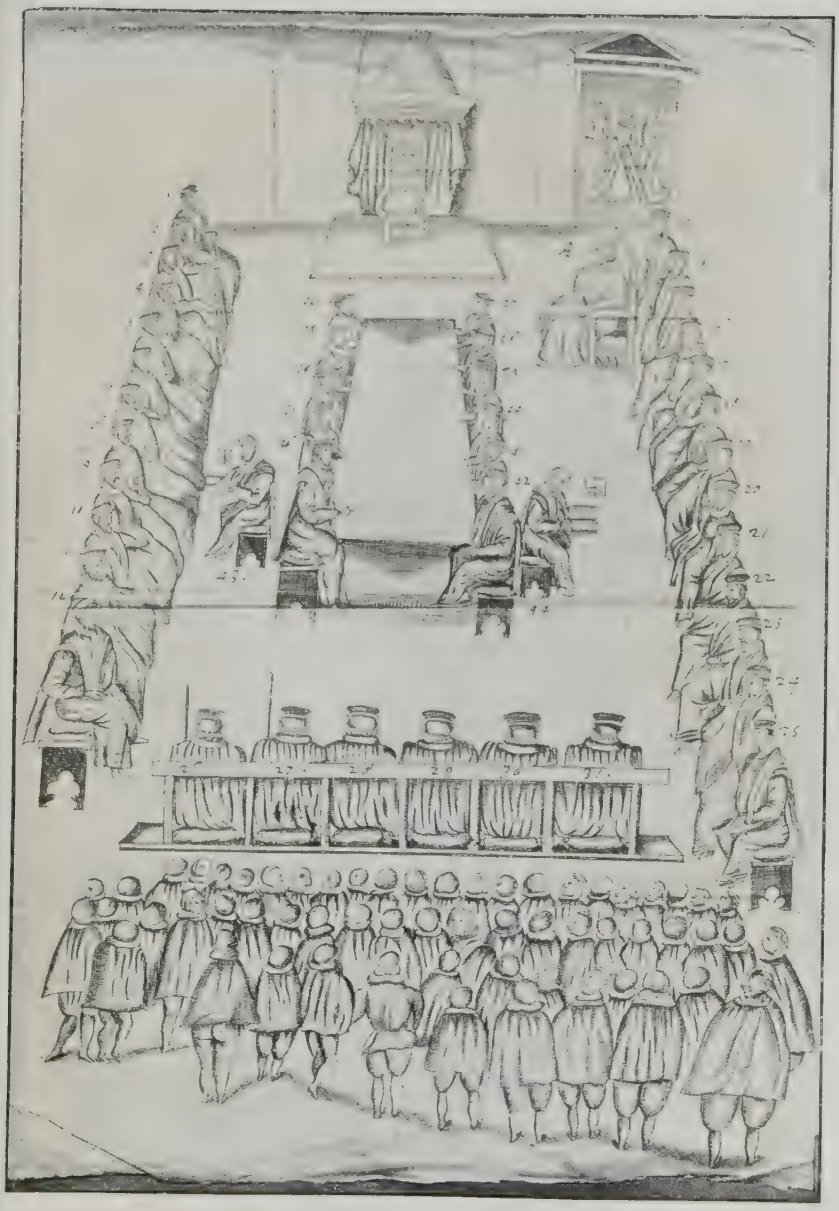
She knew the effect of her eloquent tongue, of her noble presence, the pathos of her circumstances. We need not look to Mary for the simplicity and sincerity of the martyr. There was much in her life to forget, much to conceal; if much had been repented of, that repentance was kept sacred between her own

soul and her Maker, but against the outer world she had an unassailable defence in her sense of the immeasurable wrongs that had been done her.

Again and again she had formulated her grievance in letters that had been neglected. Here at last, whatever came of it, she could lift up her voice and cry aloud and spare not. She was a woman to whom it was a first necessity to play a part in the world's eye; we may be grateful to her that it was generally a magnanimous and always a dignified one. Her speeches, both at the trial and later to those who came to announce her sentence to her, read like speeches that a passionate heart and active brain would fashion in solitude and rehearse again and again with new point and circumstance to imaginary audiences. They were too complete in themselves, too little drawn from immediate circumstance to have the calculated effect on an audience hardened to resist them. Her auditors were intent on bringing home to Mary her guilt on a particular point, she was intent on vindicating her whole course of life and bringing counter arraignment.

On the morning of Tuesday, 14th October, the Commission was assembled in a larger upper room directly above the hall. A daïs, with a cloth of state, was dressed at the upper end to represent the presence of Elisabeth, a chair of red velvet with a footstool was placed at one side for the Scottish Queen. She entered in her black robes and flowing lawn veil, supported on either side by Bourgoign and the good Andrew Melville.

Glancing at the daïs, she cried impulsively, "I am a Queen by right of birth, my place should be there."



THE TRIAL AT FOTHERINGAY

The Commissioners uncovered as she entered. Looking from one grave face to the other, a sudden anguish of solitariness swept over her, and she said to Melville, "Alas! there is a great number of councillors here and yet not one of them is for me."

But the reading of the indictment restored her courage and roused the fighting instinct. She repeated her protest that as a queen she could be subject to no tribunal but that of God, that she had consented to come thither to answer to one specific charge. She met the production of the copies of the Babington and other letters, with a flat repudiation, and the pertinent demand that the original letters and not copies should be brought as evidence. When the point came up again (as it did more than once in the interminable and disorderly proceedings) she carried the war into the enemy's camp by a sudden attack on Walsingham. He was her enemy and the enemy of her son; how could she be certain that he had not forged her cipher to procure her condemnation, she knew that he had had traffickings with one Ballard whom she knew to be a traitor. It was a home-thrust, and Walsingham was curiously agitated for a man blameless in the matter. He rose to vindicate himself, "God is my witness that as a private person, I have done nothing unworthy of an honest man, and as Secretary of State nothing unbefitting my duty." A sentence open to casuistical interpretation!

When confronted with the fact that Babington had acknowledged the genuineness of the correspondence and that Nau and Curle, her secretaries, had also confirmed this, she asked why Babington had been put to death before he had been brought face to face with her or why, her secretaries being still alive,

they were not produced in her presence as witnesses against her.

There was no arrangement in the proceedings, no cross-examination, matters old and irrelevant, such as Mary's adoption of the English arms in her early French days, were again dragged forth. At the end, disorder supervened, questions were no longer asked. Mary was attacked by assertions and accusations, especially on the part of the legal members of the Commission. This mismanagement Mary, with her usual cleverness, turned to her own advantage. Next morning she protested haughtily that she had expected to be examined by noblemen and gentlemen who knew what was due to princes, and not by lawyers accustomed to the pettifogging and brow-beating of courts of law. Without an advocate to defend her, what could one woman do against so many united in accusing her? Thenceforward Burghley kept the questioning in his own hands.

On this day Mary made large admissions. She acknowledged the letters to Mendoza, Paget and Morgan, which were produced, to be hers, and admitted that her secretaries had held communication with Babington. She admitted also that, for her own liberty and the comfort of oppressed and persecuted Catholics, she had solicited aid from foreign princes. Where she stood absolutely firm was in her denial of any knowledge of the attempt on the life of Elisabeth.

More than once in the course of these proceedings Mary had broken into vehement speech. The atmosphere was charged with hostility. She understood men too well to hope to move their pity. It was as a relief to her own indignant pain that she spoke, now rehearsing the sufferings of her fellow Catholics, now

declaiming bitterly against the monstrous illegality of her trial, now protesting her faith in God and willingness to shed her blood in His cause, and again and again returning to the burthen of her heavy wrongs. Once she took a ring from her finger and held it up. "Here, my Lords, is the pledge of love and protection which I received from your Mistress. Look well at it. It was in reliance upon this that I came amongst you. Nobody knows better than yourselves how this pledge has been kept."

It was well for Mary that she was appealing to "a wider theatre than England," and to times more just and pitiful than her own. Burghley sneers impatiently at "the Queen of the Castle" and her "long and artificial speeches," and adds, "I am sure that the audience did not think her worthy of much pity," he himself, as he affirms, having refuted her allegations on all points.

The Commission would have given their verdict that night, but an urgent message from Elisabeth forbade any decisive action and bade them adjourn for ten days. On Wednesday (15th October) the Commissioners left Fotheringay.

A unanimous verdict of the Commission, an Act of Parliament, the earnest petition of both Lords and Commons, were alike powerless to bring Elisabeth to the point of condemning her cousin to death. She had no real intention of sparing Mary's life but she had an unreasoning desire to escape the responsibility for such a decision. On November 20, she sent Lord Buckhurst and Secretary Beale to Fotheringay to inform the Queen of Scots of the verdict against her, and warning her to prepare for death.

In her last letter to her faithful old servant the

Archbishop of Glasgow, Mary herself describes the interview. She was to be put to death they told her, first because the Queen's life and crown were not safe so long as she was alive, and secondly because her life was a constant menace to the established religion. This was precisely the acknowledgment of her importance which Mary most desired. She thanked God and them for the honour vouchsafed to her of shedding her blood in the Church's quarrel. With English bluntness Lord Buckhurst hastened to assure her that she was no saint and martyr but was to be put to death for plotting against the Queen's life. She denied the accusation and affirmed that, sinner though she might be, God in His mercy would accept the sacrifice of her life which she was ready to lay down for the good of the Church. The ministrations of the Dean of Peterborough or any other Protestant divine, she quietly declined, and begged that the services of her own priest might be restored to her.

Her calm cheerfulness with its touch of triumph discomposed Sir Amyas Paulet. It upset his preconceived notions that she neither humbled herself to entreat for mercy nor felt the terrors of a guilty conscience. It was his duty to convince her of her lost condition both in this world and the next.

Her cloth of state had accompanied her in all her prisons. It had been her mother's and bore the arms of Scotland quartered with those of Lorraine. On the day Lord Buckhurst left, the 21st November, Paulet entered Mary's room unceremoniously, told her that she was now but a dead woman in the eyes of the law, having no claim to the honour and dignity of a queen and so ordered her cloth of state to be pulled down. Mary replied that being born an

SIR AMYAS PAULET

anointed queen, she held her royal estate from God alone and would only render it back into His hands with her life.

The next day when Paulet entered her room, he found that in the place where her royal emblazonments had hung, she had placed ten pictures of the Passion of her Saviour. This act to Mary was symbolical of the attitude of her mind. Paulet only saw "ten paper pictures of the Passion of Christ and other like stuff fastened upon the hangings."

To bring her to a sense of her position he remained covered in her presence and had her billiard table removed, amusement being unsuitable for a woman under sentence of death. But he had lost all power to wound or irritate his victim.

She had striven hard for liberty, she had fought and plotted and struggled for that larger share in the world's life to which she was entitled alike by birth and natural endowment. Up to the last she had been prepared to grasp at any chance that offered. But now that every effort was frustrated and hope was dead, she turned her undiminished vitality on to her last great task of dying.

There are four or five letters of Mary's written within two days of Lord Buckhurst's visit, the noblest and simplest of all her correspondence. No secretary had expanded and weakened the terse clearness of the writing, no malice embittered its spirit.

In writing to Elisabeth, she blesses God for the end set at last to the weary pilgrimage of her life. The requests she has to make are these: seeing no hope in England of Sepulture with Catholic rites she begs that her servants may have permission to carry her body to France to bury it beside "my honoured

mother," "so that this poor body of mine may find at last that rest that it never found, as long as it was joined to my soul."

She had been studying the English Chronicles and was haunted by the fates of Edward II. and Richard II.; so she begs in the second place that she may be put to death publicly, so that her servants and others may bear witness to her dying declaration of faith.

Her last request is for her servants that they may have permission to return home, with security "for such small wealth as my poverty allows me to bestow on them."

Scotland, with its short years of youth and passion, fear and sin, had long been remote and dim; now England, with its barren hopes and futile struggles, was falling away from her like a dream when one awakens, but France and the old times of her girlhood, seem to have been vividly present to Mary's recollection. She thought of herself, no longer as a Stuart nor as a descendant of Henry VII., she had gone back in spirit to the old Guise kinship. She wrote to take farewell of her cousin and assured him that her constancy would be "worthy of our house."

She and Mendoza had never met in the flesh but each had recognised in the other a kindred spirit; their diplomatic relations had ripened into personal intimacy and regard. Of him, too, she took farewell and sent him the diamond with which Norfolk had pledged his faith to her and which she had always worn. To the Pope she sent a solemn avowal of her adherence to the Catholic faith.

While Mary was thus preparing herself for the death that might at any moment free her from the "rack of this tough world," her allies and kinsfolk

were trying to secure for her some such death in life as would render her innocuous and save their credit. The King of France and his mother had little enough concern for Mary, but her life was useful to them in their dealings with Elisabeth, besides the national honour was galled that a former Queen of France should fall by the hands of an executioner.

In December a special envoy, M. Bellièvre, arrived to plead for Mary. His long and quaintly pedantic discourse has yet a sort of genuine ring about it. But foreign opposition only served more effectually than the urgency of her ministers to hasten Elisabeth's mind towards a sterner decision.

From Mary's own son, the Scottish king, it had seemed at first that little opposition was to be feared. There are sentences in a letter of September written by the Master of Gray to the Scottish ambassador, Archibald Douglas, which read like satire but are simple statements of fact. "His Majesty is very well content with all your proceedings but chiefly touching his bucks and hunting-horses, I pray you negotiate so well that you fail not to effectuate substantially *that* point. As for his mother . . . I can assure you he is content that the law go forward—her life being safe—and would gladly wish that all foreign princes should know how evil she hath used herself to the Queen's Majesty."

At various points of the proceedings against his mother assurances were sent to James that his title to the succession should not be invalidated. Left to himself he would have been contented with the negative course of not taking part against his mother. To do so, even Walsingham admitted, would be against *bonos mores.*

His ruling favourite the Master of Gray is said to have summed up his advice to Elisabeth in the Latin he so often affected. "Mortua non mordet." But public opinion was too strong for both king and favourite. D'Esneval the French Ambassador extraordinary told James that if he allowed his mother to be tried he would be disgraced throughout Christendom; the Scottish noblemen, even those who opposed Mary, felt themselves pricked in their national honour; the common people hooted James in the High Street. Most frank of all, James' cousin, Francis, Lord Bothwell, told him that if he let his mother suffer he would deserve to be hanged. This Francis was the son of Mary's half-brother, Lord John of Coldingham, whose marriage with Bothwell's sister was among the festivities which graced Mary's return to Scotland in 1561. Either from love of her brother who died early or from sentiment for Bothwell Mary had always taken a special interest in young Francis, looking after his concerns even in her captivity. Gratitude in the story of Mary has been a flower of such rare growth that it feels like a touch of wholesome mother earth to meet this young nobleman "who was prompt and free of speech and affectionate to the Queen of Scots and such an one as would not, if he discovered treachery, conceal it."

A man of this character would be no welcome colleague to the Master of Gray, accordingly he was rejected as a possible ambassador, and Mary's old friend Sir Robert Melville was associated with the Master in a special embassy to Elisabeth.

In his usual forcible diction the Master describes his perplexity at having this embassy forced on him. He must either "crab" his master by refusing to go,

or offend the English queen by the message he brought. If in spite of his mission the Queen die "men will think I lent her a hand, and live she by my travail I bring a staff on my own head."

In the end, however, two national instincts were too strong in him, the instinct to resent any action of the "auld enemy," and the instinct to let no one but themselves bully their "ancient kings."

"If I take it in hand, I must do the duty of a good subject. I must be a Scotsman, and lean to Scottish means." And, to do him justice, this part he resolutely played.

Still Elisabeth was not mistaken in feeling that James' protest was more formal than formidable, and that "with time he might be moved to digest the matter."

All through January Elisabeth had seemed as far as ever from decided action. Suddenly on 1st February, from mere weariness of the matter, she sent for her secretary, Davison, and bade him bring the warrant. She signed it along with other papers with seeming carelessness, made a jesting allusion to Walsingham's satisfaction at the fact, and bade Davison take it to the Lord Chancellor. She desired to hear no more about the matter till all was over. But as Davison was leaving the room she called him back.

Twice in Mary's life, as we have seen, she was confronted with her own letters, words written in secret proclaimed on the house-tops, plans conceived in darkness judged in the fiercest light. Let these letters be weighed in the scale of moral judgment against the letter which Elisabeth—living at ease and in freedom—now dictated to Davison and Walsingham two "honourable men" for Amyas Paulet and his colleague, Sir Drue Drury. ". . . Her Majesty doth

note in you both a lack of that care and zeal of her service, that she looketh for at your hands in that you have not, in all this time, of yourselves (without other provocation) found out some way to shorten the life of that queen. . . . Wherein besides a kind of lack of love towards her, she noteth greatly that you have not that care of your own particular safeties or rather of the preservation of religion and the public good . . . especially having so good a warrant of your consciences towards God and your credit towards the world as the Oath of Association . . . and therefore she taketh it most unkindly that men professing love towards her should, for lack of the discharge of your duties, cast the burden upon her, knowing as you do, her indisposition to shed blood."

This letter written on 1st February was received on February 2nd at five P.M. By six P.M. the recipients had written and despatched their reply. It is due to Sir Amyas to give his own words, confused, incoherent, but hot with indignation and heavy with horror. "I would not fail to return my answer with all possible speed which shall deliver unto you with great grief and bitterness of mind in that I am so unhappy as to have lived to see this unhappy day, in the which I am required by direction from my most gracious sovereign to do an act which God and the law forbiddeth. . . . God forbid that I should make so foul a shipwreck of my conscience, or leave so great a blot to my poor posterity and shed blood without law or warrant."

Perhaps now it flashed through Paulet's mind what Mary had said a few days earlier, rising from the study of the Chronicles of England. "Your history is full of blood."

When signing the warrant Elisabeth had desired to hear no more of the matter till all was over. Her Council, knowing her infirmity of purpose, took her at her word. Lord Kent and Lord Shrewsbury were appointed Commissioners to see the warrant executed. On Saturday, 4th February, Secretary Beale carried the warrant down to Fotheringay. On Monday evening the Earl of Kent arrived, and Shrewsbury on Tuesday about noon. Walsingham had sent down the executioner on Sunday night by a trusty servant; he was kept secretly at an inn at Fotheringay till the day was settled for the execution.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE END

February 8th, 1587

AS the weeks went by with no sign of impending doom, Mary had resumed her ordinary life with apparent calm. Reading and devotions occupied her days: her health and diet received the attention she always bestowed on them in the winter. If the arrival of the two earls was a shock to her, she braced herself up to meet them with composure. She had been ill and received them sitting on a couch at the foot of her bed. After respectful greetings the Commissioners proceeded at once to read the sentence. "She seemed not to be in any terror from ought that appeared by any of her outward gestures or behaviour but rather with smiling cheer and pleasing countenance, digested and accepted the said admonition of preparation to her (as she said) unexpected execution." She said in a brave voice "that that soul was unworthy of the joys of Heaven forever whose body would not in this world be content to endure the stroke of the executioner for a moment." Here she paused and, nature having her way, "she wept bitterly and remained silent."

A few weeks previously she had been again deprived of her confessor. She begged now for his services to prepare her for death. It is difficult to believe that Elisabeth, notoriously indifferent in the

matter of creeds, should have commanded this last wanton unkindness. It is quite conceivable that blundering Protestants like Kent and Paulet may have honestly thought that the terror of death might shake Mary's lifelong convictions, and drive her at the last moment to "the only stronghold of God's word."

They urged on her the ministrations of the Dean of Peterborough, who could show her the truth and "convince her of the folly and abomination of Popery." With vehemence she refused the offer. Nor could they give her the consoling assurance that her wearied body should rest in the kindly earth of France. They believed that arrangements would be made for restoring her servants to their homes. They granted her only one night to settle all her business and make provision for her dependents. Her papers and accounts they were unable to restore. There is a flash of the old unregenerate Mary in her question if Nau were dead, and her remark that he had caused her death to save himself.

They left her, warning her that she should be sent for next morning at eight. Practical always, Mary's first business was to take care of the nerves and emotions of her household, her "little flock." She bade them hasten supper for she had much to do. She ate, as usual, abstemiously but spoke cheerfully to her physician, and before rising pledged her little company. She had meant to go down into her wardrobe, but they told her that the soldiers were on guard in the passage and she refrained.

Having laid aside the robe and petticoat and wimple, which were for the last time to express her queenly state, she sat with an inventory dividing her clothes and jewels and valuables among her servants.

Her money she divided into little bags with the owner's name written on each.

She was an excellent woman of business and anxiously exact in matters of debt. Without advisers, papers or account book, she drew up her will. Even Curle is remembered, the money promised on his marriage is to be secured to him; his pension and even that of Nau are to be paid if they are proved innocent; under any circumstances Curle's wife is to be remembered. Her last letter was to the King of France. Shortly, clearly and calmly, she describes her situation cut off from help and religious consolation, but glad and willing to die for her faith. Earnestly and with feeling she commends her servants to him. Her chaplain —a young and simple man—was shut up in another part of the Castle. She wrote and asked him to spend the night in prayer for her. She hoped to see him in the morning to receive his benediction and absolution.

By this time it was two in the morning and they entreated her to take some rest. It was her custom to have the Lives of the Saints read aloud to her before she went to rest. This night Jane Kennedy was the reader. Mary bade her look for the life of a saint who had once been a great sinner. She stopped her at the life of the penitent thief. "In truth he was a great sinner but not so great as I have been. I wish to take him for my patron for the time that remains to me. May my Saviour have mercy on me and remember me and have mercy on me as He had on him at the hour of his death."

She lay on her bed for some hours. Her ladies were already in mourning dresses and knelt about the room with lighted tapers, weeping or telling their beads, but she lay quite still and they thought that she

was praying. "This soul hath penance done and penance more will do."

At six she roused herself and bade them wash her feet. She had chosen a fine lawn kerchief to be used in binding her eyes. She had herself attired with care and great stateliness; her petticoat and bodice were of dark crimson, over these she wore a black satin bodice and petticoat, with a long satin train furred and with hanging sleeves. Her head-dress was of lawn with a long flowing white veil. She had an Agnus Dei round her neck and two rosaries hung at her belt.

The door leading to her rooms was locked in the inside and she was kneeling with her maids in prayer when a loud knocking announced the Sheriff had come to fetch her. All her life, others had waited on her leisure and now she sent to bid them wait till her prayers were ended. They feared resistance and after brief consultation, were preparing to use force, but, on the Sheriff knocking again, the door opened at once and he was startled to see that queenly figure in front of him, adorned and composed as if for a state occasion. One of her servants carried the ivory crucifix from her altar in front of her, the rest followed, weeping. To their dismay they were summarily turned back at the door of their apartments.

Mary now carried the crucifix and folded kerchief in her own hands and was conducted by Paulet's halberdiers.

On the first landing she was met by the two earls who marvelled to see her so composed. At the foot of the stairs she met Andrew Melville, her steward. He was to carry the news of her death to Scotland. "It will be the sorrowfullest message that ever I

carried," he sobbed kneeling at her feet. But she comforted him saying, "Good Melville, to-day thou seest the end of Mary Stuart's miseries and that should rejoice thee." She bade him tell her friends that she died a true woman to her religion, a faithful Scottish woman and a true French woman.

Before she entered the hall, she spoke again to Sir Amyas about her servants and their future well-being. Then she begged that some of them might attend her to the scaffold, and when the earls demurred she added with the old womanly charm, "Alas! poor souls, it will do them good to bid me farewell and I hope that your mistress, being a maiden queen, in regard of womanhood will suffer me to have some of my own people about me at my death."

She undertook for her maids that they would not weep nor make a commotion. From her gentlemen she chose Melville, Bourgoign, Gorion the apothecary, and a fourth, Balthazar Hulley, an old man. Of her maids, Elisabeth Curle and Jane Kennedy. With these following her she moved into the hall and, cowering in the folds of her dress, unnoticed of all, a little dog kept close to his mistress' side.

A fire burned in the large fire-place of the hall; near it a platform was hung all round with black. On three sides a balustrade kept off the gentlemen assembled in the hall to witness the deed, on the fourth it could be ascended by steps. The two executioners masked, in black clothes and white aprons, stood motionless on the platform; stools were placed for the Queen and the two earls; there was also a black draped block and a stool, and the axe was leant against the balustrade.

While the Queen's Commission was being read the

Scottish Queen sat collected and indifferent as if what she heard concerned her not at all.

Unless he were a man of ardent faith or infinite self-sufficiency, the Dean of Peterborough must have been in the painfullest case. He approached that august and disdainful presence and, bowing low, got four times as far as "Madame, the Queen's most excellent Majesty." She stopped him firmly. "Mr Dean I am settled in the ancient Catholic religion and mind to spend my life in defence of it." He tried to condense all he had to say in one sentence, bidding her lay aside her unclean dregs of superstition, repent her wickedness and set her faith on Christ to be saved.

The earls, foreseeing a controversy, interposed and said that, as she would not listen to exhortation, they would all pray for her. While all the company joined in prayer for Mary's repentance, for a blessing on the Queen's Majesty and confusion to her enemies, Mary began to recite aloud the penitential psalms in Latin, slipping from her seat and praying with great fervour. When the rest had finished she continued her prayers, praying specially for Elisabeth, that she might serve God aright. She held the Cross in her hand, often striking it against her breast. Lord Kent could not moderate his zeal and cried, "Madame, settle Christ Jesus in your heart and leave these trumpery things."

But the crucifix meant much to Mary. As she ended her prayers she kissed it and said, "even as Thy arms, Oh Jesus, were spread here upon the Cross, so receive me into the arms of Thy Mercy." The executioner approached to help her to undress but, with a touch of playfulness, she said, "Let me do this. I understand this business better than you, I never had such a groom of the chamber." Then she

beckoned to her two ladies to help her. The affectionate, familiar service under such appalling circumstances moved them beyond bearing, and they began to sob aloud, but she placed her finger on their lips and said with the old authority, "Ne criez pas, j'ai promis pour vous," she kissed them and made the sign of the Cross over them.

She was still a noble and comely woman as she stood in her crimson undress, her white shoulders and long round throat bare. The slender figure had grown stouter without losing its stately carriage, the face had broadened, the chin was full and powerful, Elisabeth Curle weeping, kissed the kerchief and bound it round her eyes.

Then she sat down on her stool, raised her head and stretched her neck expecting the sword stroke, for such was the privilege of royal persons condemned to death in France. No stroke came but a confused sound of voices and a giving of new directions—a fearful strain on her tense nerves. The executioners helped her to rise and to arrange her head on the low-lying block.

With eyes darkened, but with hand clasping the Cross of Christ, through the terrible silence of that crowded room, she cried with unfaltering voice. "In manus tuas Domine me commendo." Then the axe fell.

When, after the savage fashion of the time, the executioner held up the head before the assembled people, the head-dress fell off and showed the hair below it quite white and short; in the anguish of death the beautiful face had contracted suddenly and looked worn and pinched like that of an old woman. The faithful little dog still lay cowering beside the dead body and could not be induced to leave it.

THE EXECUTION OF MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS

One last service her ladies were earnest to render to her. For years they had tended her in sickness and in health, they begged that only the hands that loved her might touch her body. It was roughly denied to them and they were rudely hurried back to their rooms.

Everything that had belonged to her, her beads, robes, mantles, the very drapery of the scaffold stained with her blood were burnt in the great hall fire lest they should be carried away and honoured as relics.

Meantime Henry Talbot, mounted on a swift horse, was already on his way to bear the news to London and the court.

. . . . . .

For a moment all the history of the time seemed concentrated in the hall at Fotheringay. But a moment more and the world was again plunging along its anxious, ambitious way.

Elisabeth's one anxiety was to escape all responsibility for the execution of her cousin. She stormed at her Council, banished Burghley from her presence, and flung all the blame on Davison, pursuing him with fines and imprisonments till he was a ruined man. She wrote abject letters to James assuring him of her innocence and cajoling him with an increased pension and greater assurance of the succession.

Scotland was in a ferment. Francis, Lord Bothwell, put on his armour as the only suitable "dule weed" and made a raid into England as the only adequate expression of sorrow. Had James been any other than James, the anger of his nobles would have driven him into war with Elisabeth, but he tarried and negotiated till it was decent for him to

drop his indignation and renew alliance with his mother's enemies.

In Paris, so great and universal was the emotion when the news arrived that the English ambassador expected a declaration of war. But France had troubles enough of her own to attend to and the excitement ended in tears and windy words. Meanwhile Philip of Spain continued to gather men and ships and stores for his great enterprise, and laid before the Pope Mary's demission of her claims in his favour.

So half the world forgot and half made profit of the death of the woman who had for years kept Europe in a ferment.

And when they turned again to their scheming and lying and fighting, and invading, she, thank God, was out of it all and at rest.

Again and again her story has been told, a story strange and pitiful and terrible, and of undying interest. Volumes have been written to prove her innocence, and counter volumes to prove her guilt, but innocent or guilty she has never lost her hold on the hearts and imaginations of men.

Her judges would not allow the plea she put forward so proudly, that being a queen she could be judged by none but God alone; her biographer may plead for her, that, seeing that she was a woman of queenly nature, she may be left to the mercy of that Infallible Judgment.

"Cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

THE EFFIGY OF MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS, IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

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